

Area West Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

## 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 May 2012 to January 2013.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

### Report

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

- Royal Visit
- Olympic torch preparation
- Lean Thinking process for Street cleaning and Environmental Enforcement
- Spring & summer maintenance operations
- Flooding response

### Operational Works

What a year this has been so far! We have experienced the wettest summer for 100 years! Not the best conditions for the delivery of our services, not just the mowing and herbicide applications, but also road sweeping is harder as the sweeper fills with water and bin emptying is considerably more difficult when the bin bag holds several litres of liquid.

However, despite these challenges, we have managed to tackle some major events.

First and foremost was the royal visit. Our team was heavily involved in preparing for the event, working with the town councils involved, followed by the subsequent clear up of the locations where the crowds collected. In particular in Area West we worked with Crewkerne Town council to prepare the town prior to the event to ensure it was ready to receive the huge crowd that was inevitable. The team were simply magnificent, with key works being delivered in the weeks leading up to the event, then working through the night before the visit, erecting crowd barriers and other infrastructure as directed by the police.

Later in the summer, the subsequent jubilee celebrations were supported by the service, often with regards to pre and post celebration cleaning or mowing of the targeted areas.

Following the Queens visit, we then prepared for, and cleared up after the Olympic torch relay which passed through the district as the start of a very memorable sporting year.

## Street Cleaning works

Our street cleaning teams continue to clean the Area on a daily basis, and we have started a work schedule of litter picking along the districts rural roads. We have waited to start this work schedule until recently as we need the grass on the verges to die back, this allows our teams to spot the litter more easily. It is fair to say that we are finding considerable amounts of litter, as well as flytips that have been covered in foliage all summer. It will bring us great satisfaction to address these issues and see the results of this program of work.

Along with this work program we will also be working to ensure that all kerbed areas of roads are clear of soil and detritus & where possible, areas of road and pavements which have walls against them are cleared of soil build-ups. We believe that this will both improve the look of the area and ensure that we get maximum surface water drainage performance.

The team continues to focus on managing the number of flytips found and reported across the district, and this number has continued to rise slightly, however in in Area West from March to December 2012 we have had 358 flytips reported, compared to 575 last year for the same period. The highest percentage of these consists of household waste, this does not include calls for missed refuse or side waste, but is household waste which has been moved and dumped. Our response to the problem has been to divert more enforcement time to tackling this issue and we are have seen a decline in the number of cases; this is very encouraging but also very time demanding. We will have a better idea of the future pattern of tipping in the area when we have carried out the winter litter picking as this will doubtless reveal more issues.

Following the flooding earlier in the year, we recently experienced an amount of disruption following the snow falls. Our teams were sent to help clear pathways in both Crewkerne and Ilminster, while the Chard T.C. teams cleared footways around their town. The snow did effectively disrupt our cleansing programs; however we have now resumed these work programs.

## Horticultural works

Our horticultural teams completed the summer maintenance of grassland, hedges & shrub beds. This has been a challenge throughout the year due to weather conditions; however the teams have persevered and delivered services well in spite of these difficulties.

The teams completed the winter ditch maintenance program for SSDC managed watercourses and continued to maintain the trash screens that are vital in preventing flash flooding on our own land.

All of these works were completed prior to the recent floods and will have helped to prevent property damage in many instances.

The horticultural teams are half way through the winter pruning of shrub beds across the area, and these works will be completed by March.

We have also continued to develop Snowdon Park and have planted a further 150 Cherry trees to develop the 'Cherry Walkway' that is being developed in the open space. The team also carried out repairs to the temporary track way leading in to the car park area.

This area will also be targeted as an open space that we will develop along a largely environmental theme. We have recently started working with a local ecologist to assess the current ecological value of specified sites across the district and from here site specific management plans will be produced to encourage and maximise the environmental potential of each site.

A planting scheme has been installed at The Butts at Ilminster as part of a renewal planting scheme which we aim to extend throughout the areas that we manage. We recognise that many of the planted areas across the district comprise of shrubs that have passed their 'working life' and a program of shrub bed rejuvenation is required to keep our open spaces attractive and in good order.

The service has recently designated one of our teams to focus solely on weed control throughout the year, and this is providing an improvement in service delivery as a result. With regard to weed control, we are currently trialling a new herbicide that is for use on non productive porous surfaces, such as gravel paths, around obstacles, etc., and we are hopeful that this will perform successfully and be an additional 'tool' for us when maintaining the district.

Unfortunately this product is unsuitable for the treatment of street weeds so the team will continue to use Glyphosate to address this issue, however the service has invested in a purpose built quad bike spraying system which will enable us to tackle the street weed spraying program much more efficiently and will, we believe, make a notable difference to the look of the district.

We aim to carry out winter mowing of our grassland areas; however the probability of this seems to be led by the incessant rain!

Our teams also planted spring bulbs with parish councils, with sites at Crewkerne & West Crewkerne, East Chinnock, Hinton St George, Ilminster, Merriott, Misterton, Winsham and Chillington receiving between 1,000 and 2,000 bulbs planted in each of these locations.

Recently we have been discussing working with the Council's Arboricultural Officer to extend the parish planting works to include tree planting schemes where possible across the parishes of the district. This scheme will not only increase the volume of tree cover in the district, but will also help us to meet targets in the open space strategy.

The tree risk assessment process continues to be carried out, works identified and addressed so we maintain a safe and healthy tree stock. The service and other associated services are currently ensuring that we are consciously checking for any traces of the 'new' fungus which has devastated Ash tree species across parts of the continent in order to minimise the chances of this contaminating our tree stock.

The team has also started work with a new apprentice who joined the team in December and is working with the Sports Grounds team.

Over the coming months, one of our teams will again be carrying out risk assessments of all the open spaces that we manage, rectifying any issues that are identified such as replacing damaged fencing or levelling surfaces.

## **Lean Thinking**

As part of the Councils Lean Thinking program, the 'Lean Team' has been working with the Streetscene team looking at the processes used to deliver the street cleaning and

enforcement services. These processes have now been reviewed and the final report on the service is being followed up to realise the savings identified.

I would like to pass our compliments to the lean team for their approach to the review, and thanks for the suggestions that arose from the review.

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

- Completion of the litter clearance on roadside verges
- Completion of the landscaping improvements
- Continue with highway weed control operations
- The introduction of the Parish tree planting scheme
- Focussing on developing targeted areas for ecological development

### **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.*

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