

Area West Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> March 2014

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

*Portfolio Holder:* Jo Roundell Greene - Environment Portfolio  
*Assistant Director:* Laurence Willis (Environment)  
*Lead Officer:* Chris Cooper, Streetscene Manager  
*Contact Details:* chris.cooper@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462840

### 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 February 2013 – February 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 West, are listed below:**

- Spring & summer maintenance operations – horticultural & street cleansing
- Reduction in the numbers of fly tips
- Highway weed control
- Village clean ups
- Introduction of the Parish Ranger scheme
- Flood related works
- Storm Clear up

### 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. Over the last year we have replaced the members of staff that form the Area West Street cleaning team and the new staff have had a notable impact.

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. We aim to purchase an additional quad bike in the coming year as we believe that this will enable us to improve the service that we provide, whilst keeping within budget.

As well as the weed killing program we have targeted the cleaning of the villages across the district and a separate team has visited these; litter picking, cutting back overgrowth and removing build ups of weeds and soil.

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 also had the pleasure of working alongside Councillor Vjeh, members of her ward and the Somerset Probation team to co-ordinate cleansing works carried out by offenders who litter picked a number of roads around Donyatt, Ashill, Horton & Broadway. Here we provided maps to direct the works while the parishes provided the comfort facilities required by the Probation Service.

As usual we are currently litter picking main & rural roads although this work has been interrupted by the flooding works that have affected large parts of the district. The teams have been simply superb and have worked late nights and weekends as well as their normal hours to not only keep their rounds clean, but also to produce and deliver thousands of sand bags wherever they have been needed.

We have also been out clearing debris from flood alleviation schemes screens to prevent blockages & compound flooding issues; and clear away a large number of trees which have fallen or split due to storms.

In addition to this, the high winds have caused masses of litter as the re-cycling has been blown out of the boxes and spread across the estates. We are all looking forward to spring!

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 West this year we have had 319 flytips reported between March 2013 and January 2014 this year, compared to 473 for the whole of the last financial year (although there is still another two months figures to add, we are very confident that barring disasters, there will be a great improvement this year). 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.

Our horticultural teams completed the year's summer maintenance program and it was a much easier season when compared to last year. The quality of the service has been 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 performed superbly, making a notable improvement in the quality of the sites which we maintain.

We completed our 14<sup>th</sup> 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 has overtaken this.

Other staff have delivered the winter ditch maintenance program; winter shrub bed maintenance; hedge cutting and the maintenance of the trees. We also looked at further arboricultural and landscape works throughout the district and created development plans in line with the resources available to us. Once again however, our plans have needed to be flexible to respond to the weather conditions and additional priorities that have resulted from the recent weather.

We are looking to carry out further open space improvement works in the area, and we have submitted a capital bid for works to the war memorial area of the Severals park in Crewkerne which if successful will dramatically improve this area of open space.

Work has also been done with Ilminster Town Council to access funding through the Mary Portas initiative which will improve the floral displays in the town centre.

Alongside these works, we are working with Paul Philpot to re-landscape the Minnows pond in Chard.

Mitchell gardens received plantings of wild flowers and spring flowering bulbs, and continues to be a work in progress.

We are also looking at the open spaces in Oaklands, Chard and ways to increase their appeal & usability for the public.

This year, the service has employed two new apprentices, one is located at the Yeovil recreation Ground and the other is working as part of our admin team at the depot. 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.

As well as these operational works I have had the pleasure of starting to work with the grounds teams of Crewkerne and Ilminster town councils in order to share best practice and work together to deliver the best service we can to local residents.

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 allow great improvements in efficiency in our horticultural service.

### **Parish Ranger Scheme**

Another idea that has developed over the last year has been the development of the services Parish Ranger Scheme. This has been developed as an option to the Parish Lengthsman Scheme that was discontinued following funding issues and was designed to try to offer the best of the Lengthsman Scheme but without some of the issues that may have deterred previously interested parties. In Area West this has been taken up by East Chinnock and I have attached details of the scheme should anyone else be interested in what this scheme offers.

### **Enforcement Team**

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.

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

- Litter clearance on roadside verges
- Completion of winter work programs
- Delivery of Capital funded works in Crewkerne
- Spring / Summer work programs

**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*

---