

Report to South (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 2nd December 2013

Subject: Site Based Gardeners in Community Parks & Green Spaces

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	Yes Morley North Morley South Ardsley Robin Hood Rothwell	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	No

Summary of main issues

To advise the South (Outer) Area Committee of the work that has been on going with the 3 site based gardeners funded by South (Outer) Area Committee Wellbeing Fund in 2013 at a cost of £35,654.

Recommendations

This report:

- (a) seeks to demonstrate the importance of the site based gardeners scheme within the community, funded by South (Outer) Area Committee Well-being Fund in 2013 and hopes that the Area Committee will support the site based gardener Well-being Fund application when submitted for 2014/15;
- (b) requests that the South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee notes the contents of this report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Area Committee with a review of the site based gardener's scheme that is funded by the Area Committee Wellbeing Fund from 1st April 2013 to September 31st 2013.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The South (Outer) Area Committee funded 3 site based gardeners for 6 months between April – September 2013, (37 hours per person per week) to increase the tangible on site management and development of a number of green spaces in the south outer area of Leeds.
- 2.2 The table below gives an indicative example of the some of the regular maintenance operations conducted at a community park and the frequencies of each task with and without funded site based gardeners.

<u>Site</u>	<u>Operation</u>	<u>Frequency with Funded SBG*</u>	<u>Frequency without Funded SBG</u>
Community Park	Grass Cutting	10 day cycle	3-4 week Cycle
	Strimming	10 day cycle	3-4 week Cycle
	Edge off planting beds	10 day cycle	Monthly
	Empty Bins	2 times a week	Weekly
	De litter	Daily	Weekly
	Clean playground	3 times a week	Weekly

* This is based on a pro rata frequency if the SBG is shared between multiple sites.

- 2.4 As evidenced, the site based gardener can provide a higher frequency of general operational tasks so that the areas look considerably better maintained for a longer time. However these staff must remain flexible and reactionary when non common issues arise within their respective areas.
- 2.5 Although the site based gardeners conduct lone working operations, they also at times work within the area maintenance teams in order to create marked improvements of the selected sites.
- 2.6 It was agreed by the South (Outer) Area Committee that this additional staffing resource would provide dedicated front line support in the following 11 parks and green spaces identified below.

Sites/Group of sites with a site based gardener	Ward
Lowry Road and Smithy Lane Recreation Ground	Ardsley Robin Hood
Drighlington Park and Churwell Park	Morley North
Wide Lane, Lewisham Park Magpie Lane play areas and Hembrigg Park	Morley South
Woodlesford Park, Shayfield Recreation Ground and Carlton Village Green	Rothwell

2.7 The table below provides an indication of how the South (Outer) Area Committee funded site based gardeners operational hours are divided between the parks and green spaces and the duties that they each carry out.

Site Based Gardener (SBG)	Park / Green space Name	Hours worked per week
SBG1	Drighlington Park	14.8
	Churwell Park	14.8
	Lewisham Park	7.4
	TOTAL	37

Main Duties

The site based gardener undertakes a variety of tasks from grass cutting to managing the artificial cricket wicket, keeping the surface clean and the wickets ready for use, alongside maintaining the bowling green and seasonal bedding displays.

Additional duties involve emptying of bins, community engagement, providing advice and tips on horticulture to visitors along with keeping the park well-tended.

Over and above the tasks illustrated above the member of staff also conducted one off works at these green spaces including:

- Repaired / rebuilt the damaged wall and copings (*vandalism*) at Lewisham Park
- Assisted community group in maintaining the memorial site at Lewisham Park
- Enhanced maintenance of Drighlington Park MUGA.
- Increased weeding activities within the shrub beds at Churwell Park.

Site Based Gardener (SBG)	Park / Green space Name	Hours worked per week
SBG2	Smithy Lane	7.4
	Lowry Road	7.4
	Magpie Lane / Wide Lane	14.8
	Hembrigg Park	7.4
	TOTAL	37

Main Duties

The gardener not only manages the shrub beds by undertaking litter collection and seasonal pruning, but also tends to the grass and paths, removing graffiti and over hanging branches, alongside engaging with members of the local community in particular to the Friends of Lowry Road by being a regular visible presence on site during the day. Where once Lowry Road Public Open Space suffered from anti-social behaviour, the site based gardener has managed through close working with Ward Members and residents, to reduce the incidents of ASB and improve the appearance of this public open space making it a more attractive and inviting space to walk through.

This site based gardener is also responsible for the green spaces along Wide Lane, Magpie Lane and Hembrigg Park. The post undertakes a variety of horticultural duties that range from litter collection, seasonal pruning, grass cutting, marking out of sports pitches, inspecting the refurbished play areas, alongside carrying out strimming work around obstacles and inspecting the sports pavilion.

Additionally this staffing resource has also dealt with :

- Problems of tipping and dens more effectively at Magpie Lane, Hembrigg Park and Lowry Road.
- Spent more time in tidying up the car park at Hembrigg Park (removed litter, soil and self-seeded trees).
- Increased littering duties at Lowry Road as well as dealing with vegetation encroaching into residents neighbouring gardens
- Assisting in the installation of additional benches and a set of 5 a side goal posts at Lowry Road.

Site Based Gardener (SBG)	Park / Green space Name	Hours worked per week
SBG 3	Woodlesford Park	22.2
	Shayfield Recreation Ground	7.4
	Carlton Village Green	7.4
	TOTAL	37

Main Duties

The work that this site based gardener conducts in Woodlesford Park continues to turn this little community park around. With the help of Woodlesford & Oulton Action Group (WOAG) new improvements such as benches and shrubs are being added.

The benefit of the site based gardener means there is an ever ready presence in the park on a daily basis to deal with site related matters more efficiently.

Issues of anti-social behaviour have significantly reduced following the refurbishment work undertaken.

Regular and routine visits of Shayfield Recreation Ground and Carlton Village Green are helping keep both areas clean and tidy.

Work is progressing on the extension of the play area at Shayfield Recreation Ground – subject to funding along with the development of other small green spaces around the village. Plans include the planting of fruit trees and new benches. Some minor repair works have been undertaken to help keep the village green looking smart.

The site based gardener is based at Woodlesford Park's bowls pavilion and the main duties include maintenance of bowling greens, litter collection, inspection of the play areas sweeping of paths and general amenity horticultural work.

2.8 Since the introduction of the site based gardeners there has been a significant change in public opinion which has subsequently reduced complaints to both Ward Councillors and the Parks and Countryside Service. As the site based gardeners have a regular working pattern per site, it means that users / members of the public can arrange to meet and engage with the gardeners to discuss any issues and concerns that they may have. This can assist in reducing the time it takes to resolve complaints and issues which in turn creates greater customer satisfaction.

2.9 As well as increasing customer satisfaction, the provision of this extra resource also plays a key factor in assisting the Parks and Countryside Service in its strategic objective to raise the standard of all its Parks and Opens Spaces and have all of the city's community Parks up to Leeds Quality Parks (LQP) standard by 2020.

3 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 3.1 The presence of an onsite gardener can help identify issues affecting different members of the community and identify problems which often lead to some members of a community failing to use the park and the amenities. Site based gardeners help to resolve these issues thus providing community cohesion and inclusion.

4 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.1 The site based gardeners help Leeds to contribute to PSA (Public Service Agreement) objectives that include crime reduction, reducing public fear of crime, increasing voluntary community engagement and the delivery of cleaner, safer and greener public spaces.
- 4.2 This resource also assists the Council's Parks and Greenspace Strategy objectives.

5 Resources and value for money

- 5.1 The site based gardeners are paid at B3 grade and given their important role in building community confidence and dealing with issues as they arise, this represents good value for money.

6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this scheme.

7 Risk Management

- 7.1 Parks and Countryside are professional and diligent in their approach to health and safety management and any risks will be managed through Parks and Countryside's Health and Safety Policy.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 The additional funded staffing resources that site based gardeners scheme provides means that the green spaces that the South (Outer) Area Committee nominate can receive a higher frequency of maintenance.
- 8.2 Site based gardener's act as a point of liaison with the local community, effect policing duties and deal with routine park maintenance operations.
- 8.3 Additionally, the presence of an onsite gardener helps identify issues affecting different members of the community and identify problems which often lead to some members of a community failing to use the park and the amenities. Site based gardeners help to resolve these issues thus providing community cohesion and inclusion
- 8.4 In Conclusion, the main outputs of this scheme is to ensure the continuation of increased public confidence, engagement and interaction along with undertaking additional horticultural and maintenance tasks. This ensures that the Service and the Area Committee play an important part in helping enhancing people's enjoyment of their parks and green spaces.

9 Recommendations

9.1 This report:

- (c) seeks to demonstrate the importance of the site based gardeners scheme within the community, funded by South (Outer) Area Committee Well-being Fund in 2013 and hopes that the Area Committee will support the site based gardener Well-being Fund application when submitted for 2014/15;
- (d) requests that the South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee notes the contents of this report.