

Report of Locality Manager (West and North West Leeds)

Report to North West Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: 9th December 2013

Subject: Leaf-clearance Update and Performance Report - 2013

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Adel & Wharfedale Guiseley & Rawdon Horsforth Otley & Yeadon		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:		

Summary of main issues

- a) This report provides an update on performance on this year's leaf-clearance programme in Outer North West Leeds.
- b) Additional resources are deployed each year to undertake leaf clearance across the West and North West of Leeds.
- c) In Outer North West Leeds leaf-clearance is a key priority of the area committee under the environmental services - service level agreement (SLA) that has been agreed with the area committee.
- d) This report highlights some of the delivery challenges the service initially faced this year but also sets out how good progress is now being made by combining the capacities of the additional resources and core resources to deliver effective leaf clearance.

Recommendations

That the area committee are asked to:

- a) Note and consider the information provided, and,
- b) Provide comment and feedback on the leaf-clearance performance to date.

1. Background information

- 2.1 Leaf-clearance is undertaken as part of the SLA between the West North West Environmental Services Locality Team and the Outer North West Area Committee - the current SLA was agreed on 17th June 2013.
- 2.1 The Executive Board approved revisions to the Area Committee Function Schedules to include a new delegated responsibility for Street Cleansing & Environmental Enforcement Services in March 2011. The delegation makes clear the responsibility of Area Committees to negotiate, develop and approve a SLA with the service that achieves, as a minimum, the service standards set by Executive Board. The SLA determines the principles of deployment of the available resources by: the identification of priorities for service delivery annually (both geographical and in terms of types of services delivered) the agreement of the most appropriate approaches to be taken to achieve local environmental cleanliness and quality.
- 2.2 The delegation of environmental services to Area Committee means that service resources, mainly staffing, are now devolved. Resources are organised into three wedge based teams for East North-East, South South-East and West North-West, aligned to new Environmental Services Locality Teams. The SLA sets out the detail of the resources which will be allocated to the Area Committees.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1 The WNW locality team has a requirement for seasonal leaf-clearance services in the winter months. For the past two years the Council has contracted with Continental Landscapes to undertake high-volume leaf clearance work. Continental Landscapes to undertake the bulk of leaf clearance work this year. This arrangement works well for the Council as it ensures we are able to utilise trained and equipped staff that have local knowledge from their work with Continental through-out the entire year. Continental's grounds maintenance work is seasonal in nature with peaks in summer and troughs in winter. This can lead to an inefficient use of resources, both in terms of staffing and equipment/plant in the winter months. It can also result in the discontinuity of service with experienced staff being lost to Continental Landscapes and therefore the city which can be disruptive at the beginning of the new grass-cutting season. In the past the Council has relied on agency staff to support high-volume leaf-clearance work - utilising agency staff is more expensive than the cost of using Continental staff and overall less effective.
- 3.2 This year's leaf-clearance work started week-commencing October 14th, and is scheduled to run for a 17 week period to the end of January 2014. At the time of drafting this report we have started week 8 of a 17 week programme. Continental landscapes are providing 4 full-time staff who work 5 days per week, Monday to Friday to undertake high-volume leaf clearance work. In addition to this resource, the Councils mechanical path and road sweepers have been prioritising leaf-clearance work.
- 3.3 **Service Challenges during weeks 1 to 3** - for the first three weeks - the high volume leaf clearance work was undertaken by the 4 Continental staff operating a hired and specially adapted refuse wagon which uses a large suction hose to remove leaves from the ground (Billy-goat) the Billy-goat is owned by the Council. During the first three weeks progress was significantly hampered and delayed due to constant break-downs of the Billy-goat. Sub-group members did comment and raise concerns with the Locality Manager on the lack of impact during the initial clearance operation at the last environmental sub-group meeting in early November. The effect of the constant breakdown of the Billy-goat in weeks 1 to 3 not only meant that leaf-clearance was slow - it also meant that Continental crews were having to manually handle leaves into the back of the refuse wagon i.e. using it as a large skip - this was not a good use of a vehicle and resource specifically hired to be used in conjunction with the Billy-goat.

- 3.4 During week 4 (week beginning 11th November), I took the decision to suspend the use of the Billy-goat and returned the refuse wagon to the hire company. Instead, the 4 Continental staff started using leaf-blowers in conjunction with the Locality Teams 4 large Road-sweepers, this has proved a far more effective way of clearing leaves and utilises the ability of the Road-sweepers to clear the road channels at the same time we are clearing pavements and paths. Mechanical path sweepers and caged vehicle crews have also been prioritising leaf-clearance in the lighter leaf-fall areas on outer North West either as part of their programmed work or instead where routes have been diverted in to the Outer North West area from other parts of the WNW.
- 3.5 **Progress made to date** - we have invested a lot of time during the springs and summers over the last 2 years on updating leaf-fall maps for each ward which have been used to guide deployment of cleansing crews during the leaf clearance period. The areas visited to date in Outer North West are split over a number of task-maps and are listed at Appendix 1 for member views and consideration. A considerable amount of leaf-clearance work has been undertaken in the Outer North West with some areas having received a number of repeat visits during leaf-fall. Initially the focus has been on priority routes and locations as well as member referrals - all map areas are being assessed once clearance has taken place to determine whether further visits need to be programmed. Whilst we can't be too precise, we expect leaf-clearance work to last until late mid- January 2014 although a lot depends on weather conditions. We are visiting all 13 wards across the WNW on a programmed basis until leaves are cleared but priority has been given to Outer North West due to the areas needs and high volumes of leaves.
- 3.6 **Primary Network routes** - some of the road channels have been swept on Arthington Lane - a major road closure is programmed for early February when further work will be undertaken on the high-speed route (the speed limits on a number of sections of Arthington Lane, have recently been changed to 30mph). Pool Road was swept in mid-November and the A65 has been swept several times from Kirkstall Abbey through to Menston. The A660 (Leeds Road) from K T Greens Car Dealer to the Lawnswood Roundabout and the A658 Pool Bank New Road from the traffic lights to Pool Bank Farm footpath has also been swept. The service will be programming road closures and traffic management (with Highways) of key primary networks as required to undertake annual cleansing which will include leaf-clearance and gully-cleansing.

4. Conclusions

- a) Leaf-clearance across the WNW area got off to a slow start this year for reasons outlined in this report -the impact of this slow start was particularly apparent in Outer North West due to the large volumes of leaf-fall.
- b) The service is now making good progress and leaf-clearance is back on track. We will continue to prioritise work and deploy resource based on local area needs and risks and continue to ensure leaves are cleared and removed to a good standard and in an effective and safe way.
- c) Valuable lessons have also been learnt for future leaf-clearance activity in relation to equipment, method and more optimal use of resources.

5. Corporate Considerations

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

- a) Leaf-clearance is undertaken under the environmental Services Service Level Agreement with the area committee - various consultation and engagement exercises have been undertaken with Members on an individual basis, as well as at ward, sub-group and Area Committee level.
- b) Performance against the SLA is now routinely discussed at all Environmental Sub-Groups.

5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

A key principle of locality working and the Service Level Agreement is a focus on delivering the best outcome for residents across the area, so that the streets and neighbourhoods in which they live are of an acceptably clean standard. This principle underpins equality and community cohesion, seeking to bring and maintain neighbourhoods to an acceptable environmental standard.

5.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

The delegation of environmental services to Area Committees, via an approved Service Level Agreement, will significantly contribute towards the Stronger Leeds section of the new Safer & Stronger Communities Plan 2011-15. By delivering services at an Area Committee level, the priority to *'ensure that local neighbourhoods are clean'* will be much more achievable.

5.4 Resources and Value for Money

There are no resource implications – leaf-clearance is funded from existing locality team budgets.

5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- a) There are no legal implications.
- b) The report contains no information that is deemed exempt or confidential.

5.6 Risk Management

There are no risk management implications within this report.

6. Recommendations

That the area committee are asked to:

- a) Note and consider the information provided, and,
- b) Provide comment and feedback on the leaf-clearance performance to date.

7. Background documents¹

- a) There are no background documents associated with this report.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.

