

Report of Area Improvement Manager, South East Leeds

Report to South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 31st March 2014

Subject: Garden Maintenance Service Evaluation 2013/14

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	Ardsley & Robin Hood Morley North Morley South Rothwell	
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

- 1 The Outer South Area Committee commissioned a garden maintenance service, delivered by Morley Elderly Action (MEA) for an initial three year period ending in 2013.
- 2 In March 2013 Area Committee approved funding for a further three years subject to Executive Board approval of finance budgets. This report provides an update and evaluation of the scheme delivered in 2013/14.

Recommendations

- 3 Members are asked to:
 - (a) note the contents of the report and make comment as appropriate;
 - (b) agree to the continuation of the scheme in 2014/15.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update and evaluation of the Garden Maintenance Scheme delivered by MEA in 2013/14.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Outer South Area Committee commissioned a garden maintenance service, delivered by Morley Elderly Action (MEA) for an initial three year period ending in 2013.
- 2.2 In March 2013 Area Committee approved funding for a further three years subject to Executive Board approval of finance budgets. This report provides an update and evaluation of the scheme delivered in 2013/14.

3 Main Issues

- 3.3 The main objective of the gardening scheme is to provide a gardening service to the elderly and disabled. The service helps to prevent depression and despair at not being able to cope with the garden. It also helps to prevent accidents, such as tripping and falling as the garden is kept neat and tidy and does not have overgrown bushes and grass. A client can also benefit from being able to sit in their garden or walk around it, promoting healthier lifestyle. Benefits of the garden maintenance scheme include:
- Provision of work stream to eleven gardeners
 - Providing a reassurance to customers that workers have been CRB checked and are reliable
 - Provision of a service that ensures gardens look cared for and prevent trips and falls
 - Provides a deterrent to opportunist rogue gardeners from overcharging the elderly
 - Promoting feeling of wellbeing and provides human contact for the lonely and isolated.
- 3.4 Work undertaken includes grass cutting, strimming, hedge cutting, cutting back bushes and small trees and weeding. Garden tidying at the beginning and end of the seasons is also undertaken. On occasions there has been other maintenance work requested by the client and MEA have endeavoured to help where possible. Clients can have a maximum of one subsidised hour per fortnight or equivalent. They can have extra hours at the gardener's full rate and if at the end of the season, funds allow, any extra projects may get more hours at subsidised rates. However, unlike previous years, this has not been possible this year as the funding has been fully utilised.

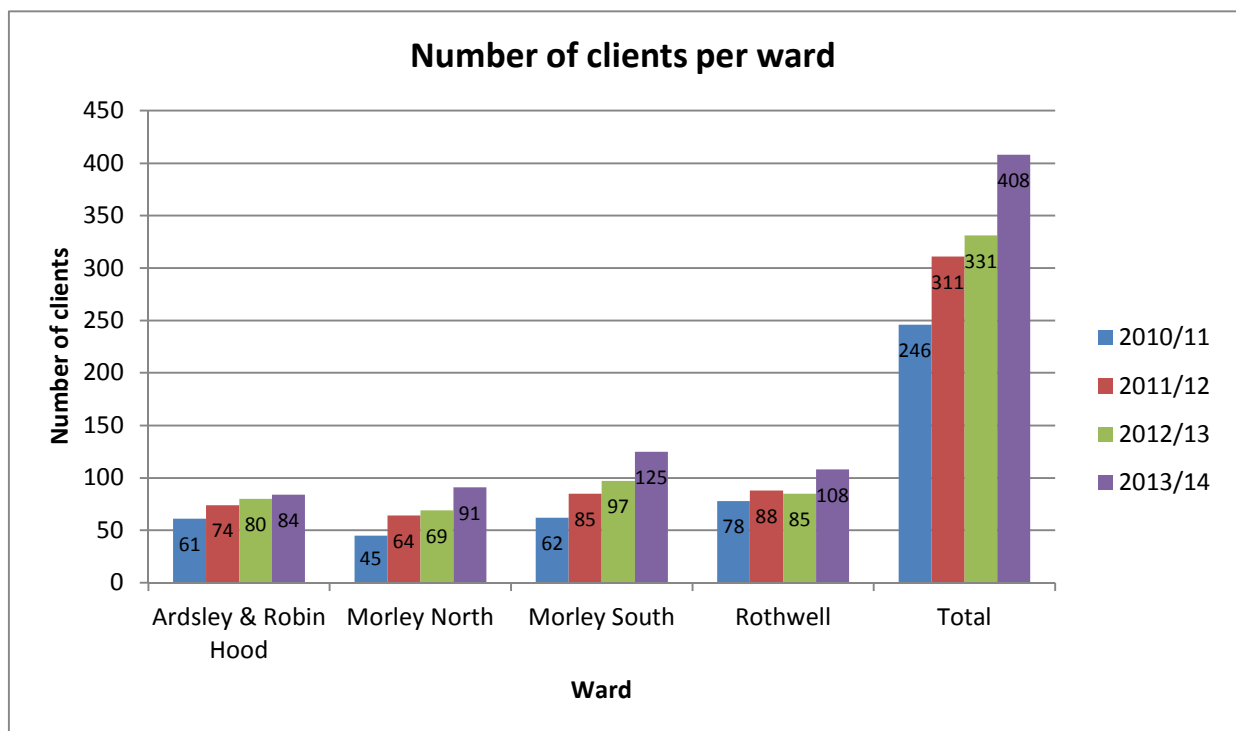
3.5 The scheme is a 12 month garden maintenance programme and in previous years there have been a few clients having a service over the winter months. Whilst funds have been fully utilised clients have paid the full gardeners' fee to receive the service.

- 3.6 The targeted priority groups are:
- anyone aged over 60
 - those with a disability
 - anyone unable to cope because of old age

2013/14 Evaluation

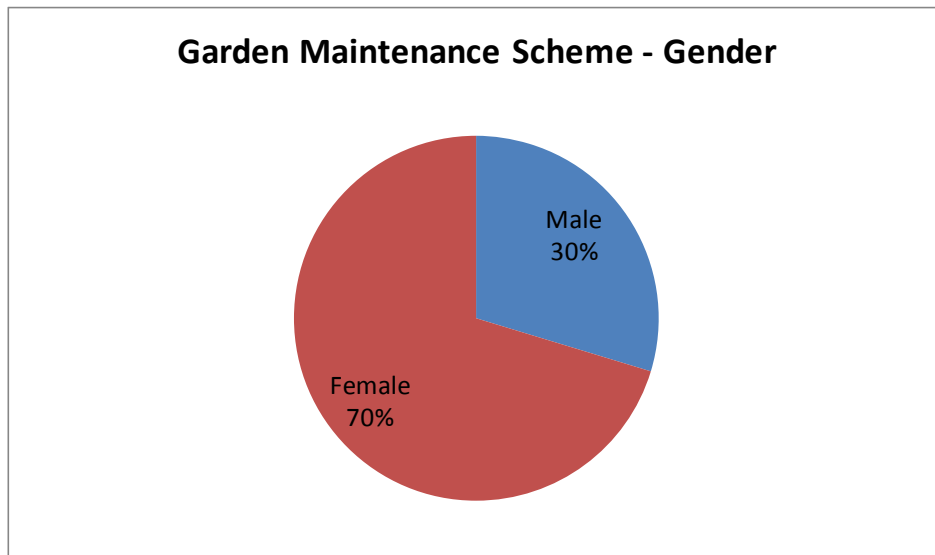
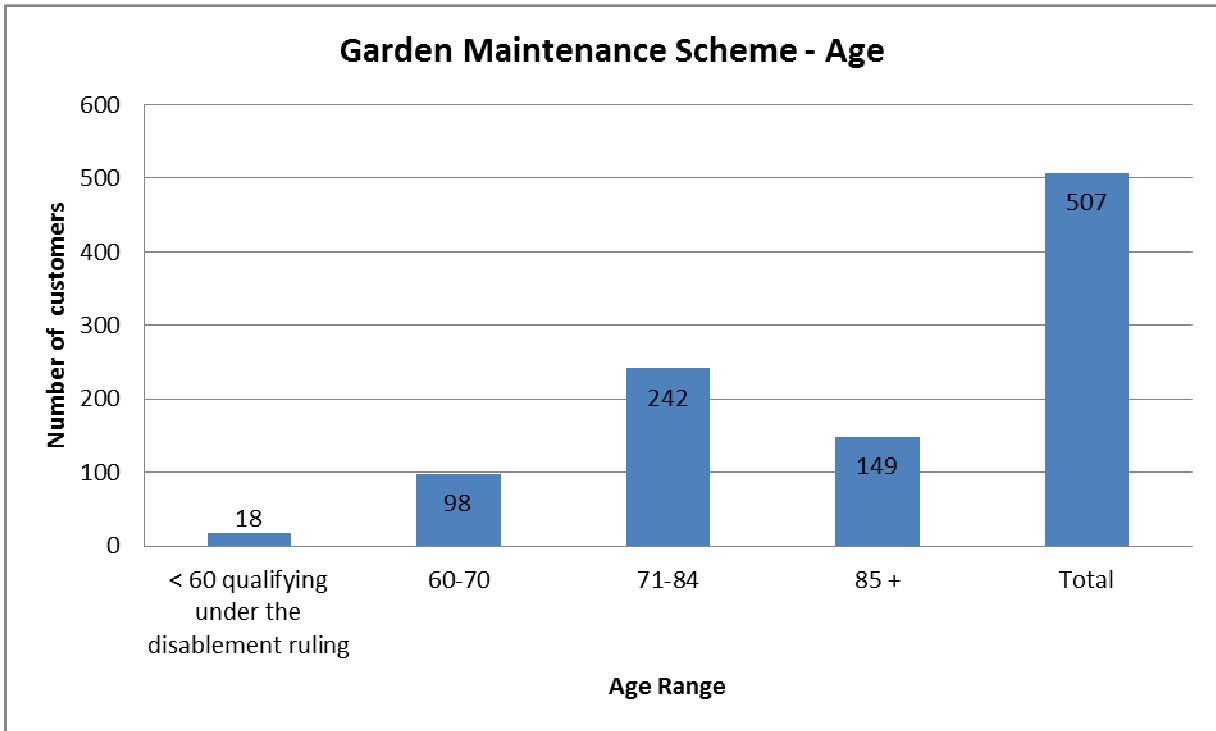
3.7 During the year the number of gardens registered in the scheme rose gradually from a starting point of 294 in March 2013 to 382 at the end of the season. The number of gardens serviced during the year was 408 gardens benefiting at least 512 people.

3.8 MEA has continued to increase the client base in each of the four wards and a comparison is shown in the table below. MEA promote the service through newsletters (sent to over 1000 households 3 or 4 times per year) in the Morley, Ardsley area and notices are placed on boards in the Morley Town Hall, tearooms and reception. The service is included whenever MEA speak to any person or group about the range of services they provide. In Rothwell the scheme is promoted through the gardeners and through Rothwell Live at Home Scheme, who also operate in the Robin Hood & Lofthouse areas.



3.9 The following tables illustrate the age range* and gender* of those benefiting from the service in 2013/14.

*Based on clients who disclosed their details



MEA Added Value

3.10 The additional benefits of the garden maintenance scheme include:

- Provision of work stream to eleven gardeners
- Providing a reassurance to customers that workers have been CRB checked and are reliable

- Provision of a service that ensures gardens look cared for and prevent trips and falls
- Provides a deterrent to opportunist rogue gardeners from overcharging the elderly
- Promoting feeling of wellbeing and provides human contact for the lonely and isolated.

3.11 Over the year the project has serviced 408 gardens, made 4165 visits, providing 4375 hours of gardening.

Monitoring

3.12 Regular monitoring is undertaken by MEA to ensure high standards of quality and client satisfaction with the service. Weekly timesheets are completed and submitted by all gardeners. Random checks are in place to monitor standards which include at least two site visits per month and a short telephone questionnaire with clients who are selected at random.

3.13 Most people say that the gardening service is invaluable as they cannot do gardening any more due to disability or old age but they still want a neat and tidy garden to look out on or to sit in. It makes them feel more contented and happy to see a lovely garden. A lot of ladies are happy to see the garden their late husband tended is still being looked after. Examples of the garden maintenance scheme is attached at **Appendix 1**.

3.14 The services helps to prevent depression and despair at not being able to cope with the garden. It also helps to prevent accidents, such as tripping and falling as the garden is neat and tidy and does not have overgrown bushes and grass. A client can also benefit from being able to sit in their garden or walk around it, promoting healthier lifestyle.

3.15 Clients are asked to complete a feedback sheet and a selection of quotes below demonstrates the important role this service provides to support older people to continue to live independently at home and support their health and wellbeing.

- “Very pleased with the service. The gardener is polite, helpful and gives and excellent professional service at all times. Thank you.”
- “There is nothing I can say apart from everything is perfect with the gardening service and the gardener really does a fabulous job.”
- “I am very satisfied with the gardeners I have. They are polite and friendly and do a good job. I would be lost if I didn’t have the gardeners coming.”
- “We are very pleased with the help we get and the boys are very trustworthy. Great work.”
- “As neither my husband or myself are fit and able to garden owing to ill health we appreciate having this chore done for us. The gardening is very good and helpful. This is one more job we don’t have to worry about.”

Complaints

- 3.16 There have been few complaints this year (7 during 2013/14). MEA take all complaints seriously and, if necessary, a visit is paid to the garden in question and the gardener is consulted. If it is identified that the work has not been completed to the standards required, a gardener has gone back free of charge.

Advertising and Promotion

- 3.17 Advertising and promotion this year has been done through the gardeners whilst working in their areas. Newsletters from MEA are sent out four times a year which includes an advert for the gardening service. MEA also promotes the scheme on home visits, at reception and when anyone telephones for help and advice. Rothwell & District Live at Home Scheme also promote the scheme in similar ways.

Wellbeing Contribution

- 3.18 Area Committee agreed to a revised scheme to be delivered in 2013/14 which saw a reduction in management fee to enable the scheme to be extended. Wellbeing funding was allocated to support the salary of a part time administrator for the scheme, a management fee to MEA and to subsidise the standard hourly rate to give a client charge of £11.00 per hour. Actual spend is outlined below:

Item	Allocation 2013/14	
	Allocated	Spent
Admin salary and on costs	£11,500.00	£11,500.00
Management Fee and all related costs including IT, utilities etc	4,000.00	£4,000.00
Subsidy (4375 x £4 2013/14)	£17,500.00	£17,500.00
Total	£33,000.00	£33,000.00

2014/15 Scheme

- 3.19 In 2013/14 the take up of the scheme has increased beyond capacity. This increase in the number of customers has seen the waiting list grow to 11 residences. Given the increased number of customers and associated administration time required to deliver the scheme, it is now at full capacity. MEA will continue to deliver the garden maintenance scheme and maintain at the current numbers and will not undertake any proactive publicity next year. Additional funding would be required if the scheme were to grow further.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.2 This project was developed to address priorities in the Area Committee Business Plan. The production of this plan is informed by Local Councillors and local residents. The project has been developed in consultation with Elected Members and local communities.

4.3 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.3.1 Community groups submitting a project proposal requesting funding from the Well being budget have an equal opportunities policy and as part of the application process, complete a section outlining which equality groups the project will work with and how equality and cohesion issues have been considered.
- 4.3.2 Internal and statutory partners are committed to equality and cohesion and all projects they are involved with will have considered these issues.
- 4.3.3 A light touch Equality Impact Assessments is carried out for all projects.

4.4 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.4.1 The project outlined in this report contributes to targets and priorities set out in the following council policies:
- Vision For Leeds
 - Health and Well being City Priority Plan
 - Safer and Stronger Communities Plan
 - Regeneration City Priority Plan

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.
- 4.5.2 Decisions taken by the Area Committee in relation to the delegated functions from Executive Board are not eligible for Call In.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 This report provides an update on the Gardening Scheme and no risks have been identified.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The report provides up to date information on this key area of work for the Area Committee.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are asked to:
- (a) note the contents of the report and make comment as appropriate;
 - (b) agree to the continuation of the scheme in 2014/15.

Background documents¹

There are no background documents associated with this paper.

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.

Before	After
 A photograph of a lawn area next to a brick house. The lawn is overgrown with weeds and has a concrete path leading to the house. A lawnmower is visible on the lawn.	 A photograph of the same lawn area after maintenance. The lawn is neatly mowed, and the concrete path is clean and clear.
 A close-up photograph of a garden bed. It is overgrown with tall grasses and weeds, obscuring the plants underneath.	 A close-up photograph of the same garden bed after maintenance. The weeds have been removed, and the plants are clearly visible.
 A photograph of a garden area with several hedges. The hedges are overgrown and messy, with some debris on the ground.	 A photograph of the same garden area after maintenance. The hedges are neatly trimmed and the ground is clean.
 A photograph of a large field of tall, dry grass. A lawnmower is lying on the grass in the foreground.	 A photograph of the same field after maintenance. The grass has been mowed and is much shorter.