

**Report of:** The South East Area Leader  
**Report to:** Outer South Community Committee  
**Date:** Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
**Subject:** Outer South Garden Maintenance Scheme

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

In 2015/16 Morley Elderly Action (MEA) delivered the final year of a three year garden maintenance scheme and an evaluation report was presented at the Outer South Older Person's Sub Group meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

Members determined the requirement for a discussion with the Manager of MEA at its March 2016 Outer South Community Committee meeting and subsequently requested the Area Leader to investigate alternative schemes for comparability and provide the Outer South Community Committee with options for consideration for the new financial year.

### Recommendations

1. The Outer South Community Committee is asked to note the content of the report.
2. The Outer South Community Committee is asked to consider the options detailed in **Section 6** and Appendices of this report and inform the actions of officers on its next steps.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report seeks to inform a discussion at the March 2016 Outer South Community Committee on the future of a gardening scheme in the Outer South area.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 In 2005, Members of the Outer South Area Committee considered how they might respond to elderly and disabled residents of the outer south wards who had voiced their fears that unattended gardens could give the impression that the occupier is incapable of up keep and may be targeted by criminals.
- 2.2 At that time, three organisations were identified to deliver a scheme. These were, Morley Elderly Action, Groundwork and Leeds South Homes in collaboration with the New Deal Team.
- 2.3 In February 2009, Members commissioned Care and Repair and Morley Elderly Action to operate garden maintenance schemes in 2009/10 across the Outer South. Morley Elderly Action received £17,000 and Care and Repair Leeds received £23,000, respectively, from the Area Committee's revenue Well Being Fund.
- 2.4 A review of the operation of both schemes highlighted issues of rising costs and areas of operation and a unified service delivery provision was determined as a way forward. MEA and Care and Repair Leeds were invited to scope a single proposal for the Area Committee's consideration and in February 2010, a single scheme to be delivered by MEA at a cost of £33,000 per year for three years was approved.

## **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 According to the 2010 UK Census there are 16,607 people over the age of 65 living in Outer South area of Leeds. Unkempt gardens continue to be an issue for the overall appearance of some neighbourhoods and they continue to be a security and health and wellbeing risk for a group of vulnerable residents in the Outer South Area.
- 3.2 The Outer South Community Committee requested a report to inform a discussion on the efficacy of continuing a gardening scheme in the Outer South and to provide reassurance that its Well Being funding is being used to best effect.

## **4.0 Examples of Gardening Service Providers**

### **4.1 Kirklees Council**

- 4.1.1 Kirklees Council do not operate a garden maintenance scheme themselves. Kirklees Council signposts residents to a website: [www.connecttosupport.org](http://www.connecttosupport.org). Kirklees residents are able to search for help from local to national products and services and find information, advice and guidance on a range of topics. Services listed on the website have been vetted.

- 4.1.2 Two gardening service providers are listed on the Kirklees website:

**Company A** – Huddersfield based incorporated limited company which was registered in June 2013. They are committed to providing the highest quality home

care and support services that enable older people to live independently in their own homes. Bespoke services include cleaning, laundry, shopping, personal care, handyman service and gardening. Each person supported is treated as an individual and their services are tailored according to client needs. The cost of the gardening service is **£15.55** per hour and can provide for mowing, lawn treatment, beds and shrubbery, leaf and litter clearance, patio cleaning, fencing, planting and soft landscaping.

**Company B** – A registered charity originally set up in 2009. The company’s aim is to promote good health in communities by providing inclusive and creative opportunities for physical activity, to aid mental wellbeing through the provision of outdoor therapeutic activity for: families with complex needs; people in isolated and vulnerable circumstances; people with mental health issues. They provide education on the natural environment and the seasons through gardening and outdoor activities, particularly focusing on engaging young people and children. They carry out such tasks as seed sowing, propagation, weeding, planting, garden maintenance, bulb planting, making planters, habitat creation, etc. Typical cost of the service is **£13.50** per hour and is dependent on individual needs and requirements.

## 4.2 Leeds City Council

4.2.1 Leeds City Council also offers a signposting service through the [www.LeedsDirectory.org](http://www.LeedsDirectory.org) and a number of gardening service providers are listed. A random selection of service providers were called on the telephone. The following information was collected:

Name	Cover Outer South?	DBS check?	Services Offered	Qualified	Cost	Other
Company 1	Yes	Yes	lawns, borders, plus bigger jobs	No	Varies - lawns £10	Working with Burmantofts Senior Action already
Company 2	Yes	Yes	Lawns, borders, hedges	No	£15 per hour	Small business - 1 person plus seasonal help
Company 3	Yes	Yes	lawns, borders, hedges, winter care	City & Guilds Horticulture	£17 - lawn	10% OAP discount. Already works with Belle Isle Elderly Winter Aid
Company 4	Yes	Yes	Lawns, borders, hedges (not bigger jobs)	Yes, studied Horticulture at Shipley College	£12.50 per hour	Registered with Land Registry
Company 5	Yes	No	Lawns, borders, hedges	studying horticulture	£15 per fortnight	Signs/Uniforms to show who they are. Small business - 2 people
Company 6	Yes	No, but happy to do this	Lawns, borders, hedges + bigger jobs	Yes NVQ	Ranges from £10 - £40 per month	12 years experience with regular clients. Morley based.

4.2.1 Internally, a gardening service is not something that the Council’s Parks and Countryside Service are able to offer.

### **4.3 Groundwork Garden Enterprise**

- 4.3.1 Groundwork has been operating a Garden Enterprise in Selby District since 2012. Funded through North Yorkshire County Council, Selby District Council and Selby Town Council the Garden Enterprise programme was set up to offer a garden maintenance service which will vary according to the time of year and weather conditions and it uses a multi skilled team to carry out gardening work such as lawn mowing, hedge cutting, weeding and pruning.
- 4.3.2 It also undertakes small landscaping jobs and offer advice on low maintenance gardening, and seek to achieve some sales through the marketing of hanging baskets, plants and Christmas wreaths.
- 4.3.3 Beneficiaries of the programme live in the Selby District area and will either be retired and over the age of 55, or registered disabled, or have been identified as having a special need, for example temporarily disabled following a hospital procedure.
- 4.3.4 The project is run by a full time Team Leader supported by a Landscape Gardener and 40 trainee placements created each week, equating to approximately 4 people per session.
- 4.3.5 On-going training and support is provided for trainees as gardeners, drivers, assisting with fundraising, or administration. Also the Selby Garden Enterprise will take people on work placements re-skilling them through vocational opportunities and equipping them with green skills.

### **4.4 The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)**

- 4.4.1 TCV worked with Leeds West NW Homes on a four month summer scheme in 2013. West NW Homes had a supervisor from an apprenticeship scheme whose trainees were placed alongside core staff for 2 days per week for 4 months
- 4.4.2 Inner West Area Committee covered the costs of getting a team of 8 volunteers trained in brush cutter use and general safety prior to them working with the supervisor over the 4 months.
- 4.4.3 The aim was to move people who needed a more work focused experience from our volunteer group towards employment. The project would need to ensure an adequate cohort of eligible people at the beginning and greater input needed in terms of people being prepped to seek work and pursue appropriate vacancies.

### **4.5 Swarcliffe Gardening Scheme funded by Outer East Area Committee**

- 4.5.1 In 2012, the Outer East Area Committee provided £20,000 of funding for a 6 month scheme which operated from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September. Swarcliffe Good Neighbours operated the scheme covering all four wards of the Outer East Area however most gardens were recorded to be in the Cross Gates & Whinmoor wards.
- 4.5.2 The contract was developed to also include a painting and decorating service from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> March. The painting and decorating service was eventually dropped when budgets were tightened to keep costs down.

4.5.2 The service was available to residents that were pensioners or that were a person with disabilities without the support of an able bodied family member living with them. One free cut/tidy was provided with any subsequent work being charged at a discounted rate of £13.50 per hour.

4.5.3 The target for the period under consideration was 400 gardens. 442 gardens had been maintained by the end of the scheme. These gardens consisted of 273 free contributions and 169 paid for follow-up contributions. Management costs were typically of the order of 10%. After 2012, a number of years of missed targets were recorded.

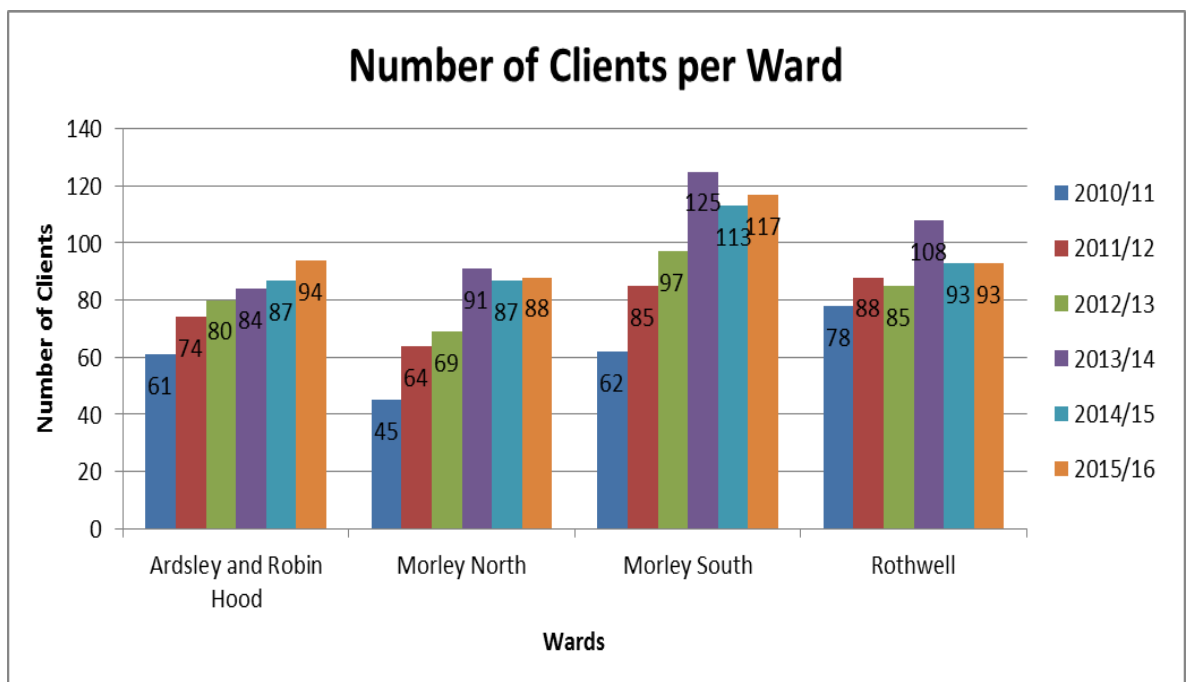
4.5.4 The last year of the service was 2014 when Swarcliffe Gardening Scheme advised they were not going to bid for the contract. Outer East Community Committee no longer has a gardening scheme.

**4.6 Horsforth Live at Home Scheme funded by Outer North West Area Committee**

4.6.1 Outer North West Area Committee provide a small amount of funding to support a garden maintenance scheme operated by Horsforth Live at Home Scheme. Last year, between March and October 2015 Horsforth Live at Home ran the scheme without any additional funding using the services of up to 7 gardeners covering 67 gardens in a small area. Although the scheme is in demand, they are currently reviewing the proposal to continue it next year. The scheme is not comparable to the Outer South area scheme but is included here for information.

**4.7 Morley Elderly Action (MEA) - Current Service Provider Funded by the Outer South Community Committee**

4.7.1 In 2013, Area Committee approved a single scheme to be delivered by Morley Elderly Action (MEA) at a cost of £33,000 per year for three years (£99,000 in total). The targeted priority groups are the over 60s, people with disabilities or those unable to cope as a consequence of old age. MEA has increased the overall client base initially from 246 in the first year of the scheme (2010) to 392 in 2016, the final year of the current scheme. The ward split is illustrated in the table below.



- 4.7.2 To ensure area wide based coverage of other additional services provided by MEA, strong links have been developed with Rothwell & District Live at Home Scheme.
- 4.7.3 The Outer South Community Committee agreed to a revised scheme to be delivered in 2015/16. Wellbeing funding was allocated to support the salary of a part time administrator for the scheme, overhead costs to MEA and to subsidise the £15.00 standard hourly rate to give a client charge of £11.00 per hour. Actual allocation/spend is outlined below:

Item	Allocation 2015/16	
	Allocated	Spent
Admin Staff Salary	£11,500.00	£11,500.00
Overheads and all related costs including IT, utilities etc	3,000.00	£3,000.00
2015/16 Subsidy: £4 x 4625 hours	£18,500.00	£18,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>£33,000.00</b>	<b>£33,000.00</b>

## 5.0 Summary

- 5.1 This review requested by Community Committee has shown that the gardening schemes highlighted in this report are by their nature bespoke to the areas that they deliver to and are not readily comparable. Additionally, the reliability of a service or its fitness for purpose to support vulnerable clients is not always clear and making comparisons in relation to value for money between schemes becomes more difficult.
- 5.2 A tendering exercise with clearly comparable criteria is perhaps a way forward to assure that value for money is being secured. Officers would need to request quotations for a comparable service delivery to gauge the efficacy of a tendering exercise. At the time of writing these quotations are not available.
- 5.4 Recommendation from the Outer South Older Person's Sub Group to the Community Committee is that there should be a 10% reduction in the total cost by eliminating the ongoing running and overheads costs of the scheme without a reduction in the gardening service provided to the clients and that MEA look actively at matched funding opportunities to subsidise their offer with a view to bringing the overall cost down further.

## 6.0 Options for Future Service Delivery

- 6.1 The Outer South Community Committee is requested to consider the following options:

- (a) Discontinue the garden service;
- (b) Outer South Older Person's Sub Group meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2016 recommendation to the Community Committee in agreement with MEA:
  - There is to be a £3,300 (10%) reduction in total funding on the total of £33,000. This is to come from the overhead/staffing costs not the subsidy to the gardeners so there should be no reduction in the number of gardens that can be maintained under the scheme.
  - Matched funding should be sought e.g. funding from the HAP

(c) Consider a competitive tendering exercise to test value for money.

(Option C would require an interim delivery arrangement to be secured).

## **7.0 Corporate Considerations**

### **7.1 Consultation and Engagement**

7.1.1 This project was developed to address priorities in the Outer South Community Committee Plan, the production of which is informed by Local Councillors and local residents.

### **7.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

7.2.1 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. A light touch Equality Impact Assessments is carried out for all projects.

7.2.2 Internal and statutory partners are committed to equality and cohesion and all projects they are involved with will have considered these issues.

7.2.3 The report seeks elected member views on the provision of a service to the elderly and/or people with disability in areas where unkempt gardens may pose a security and health and wellbeing risk.

### **7.3 Council policies and City Priorities**

7.3.1 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

### **7.4 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

7.4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.4.2 Decisions taken by the Area Committee in relation to the delegated functions from Executive Board are not eligible for Call In.

### **7.5 Risk Management**

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

## **8.0 Conclusions**

8.1 This review requested by the Outer South Community Committee has shown that the gardening schemes highlighted in this report are by their nature bespoke to the areas that they deliver to and are not readily comparable. Nevertheless, options detailed in **Section 6** have now been offered and the Outer South Community Committee is requested to consider options for future service delivery and direct officers to conduct follow up work as appropriate.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

9.1 The Outer South Community Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

9.2 The Outer South Community Committee is asked to consider the options detailed in **Section 6** of this report and inform the actions of officers on its next steps.

## **10.0 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

10.1 There are no background documents associated with this paper.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.