
Report of the Director of Environments & Neighbourhoods Directorate

South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 19th October 2009

Subject: Garden Maintenance Service Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ardsley and Robin Hood Ward
Morley North
Morley South
Rothwell

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity ☐
Community Cohesion ☐
Narrowing the Gap ☐

Council
Function

☐

Delegated Executive
Function available
for Call In

☒

Delegated Executive
Function not available for
Call In Details set out in the
report

☐

Executive Summary

The Outer South Area Committee commissioned Care and Repair Leeds and Morley Elderly Action, to operate Garden Maintenance Services in 2009/10 that offer subsidised services for vulnerable residents across the Outer South. Further to previous Area Committee reports presented in February 2008 and February 2009, Members are aware that the schemes operate differently and as a result secured different funding contributions from the Area Committee revenue Well being budget, Morley Elderly Action, £17,000 and Care and Repair Leeds, £23,000. At the September Area Committee, Members agreed to receive an update report on the delivery of the schemes to date and details of an option for a single scheme to operate for 2010/11.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide members with an update of the two commissioned Garden Maintenance Schemes operating in the Outer South during 2009/10.
- 1.2 To ask Members to agree to Area Management Team continuing to develop a single scheme for 2010/11.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Care & Repair Leeds Garden Maintenance Service started in July 2006, covering the Rothwell, Woodlesford and Lofthouse areas of Leeds. It is targeted at those aged 60 and over and disabled people. The service was initially carried out by a full-time gardener employed by Care & Repair, assisted by a volunteer. By February 2008 Care & Repair had employed a part time gardener and requested extra funding from the Area Committee to maintain the service. The service offers basic garden maintenance, including hedge and lawn cutting, weeding and general tidying. A charge per job is made dependent on the size of garden and amount of work needed.
- 2.2 The MEA scheme started in 2001 and covers Morley and parts of Ardsley and Robin Hood. It is mainly targeted at those aged 60 and over and disabled people. Having previously employed gardeners, MEA now deliver the service through existing self employed gardeners, who are CRB checked. This releases MEA from all employment regulations and administration as well as the responsibility of collecting the service charge and finding work for staff during severe inclement weather. The service charge is £10 per hour and the gardeners then invoice MEA for the difference between the £10 and their hourly rate. The service offers basic garden maintenance, including hedge and lawn cutting, weeding and general tidying.
- 2.3 At the February 2009 Area Committee, Members commissioned both organisations to operate garden maintenance schemes in 2009/10 across the Outer South. Morley Elderly Action received £17,000 revenue Well being Funding and Care and Repair Leeds received £23,000 revenue Well being Funding.
- 2.4 Members agreed at the September 2009 Area Committee to receive an update report on the delivery of the schemes to date and details of an option for a single scheme to operate across the whole of the Outer South in 2010/11.

3.0 Care & Repair Scheme Monitoring Update

- 3.1 From the beginning of March until the end of July 2009, a total of 395 gardening jobs have been completed at the homes of 108 different clients. This is indicative of the demand from residents and the hard work of the gardening team who deliver the service. Of the 395 jobs, a few were one off garden clearances; however, 100 clients receive a regular garden maintenance service. The visits vary between half and hour and 2 hours, dependent on the work required.

Time	Number of visits
½ hr	36
1 hr	247
1.1/2 hrs	46
2 hrs	34
2.1/2 hrs	7
3 hrs	15
3.1/2 hrs	2
4 hrs	7
5 hrs	1
Total visits	395

3.2 A benefit of commissioning a third sector organisation to deliver the scheme is that all of the clients receive information on the wide range of services offered by Care & Repair Leeds, which aim to promote independent living. These include Home Maintenance, Disabled Adaptations, Falls Prevention, Housing Options, Delivery Service, and Advice and Support. Where necessary Care and Repair will refer onto other statutory and voluntary organisations.

3.3 All of the customer feedback continues to be very good and this is confirmed through clients wish to be included in future Garden Maintenance schemes.

3.4 **Funding**

Funding for the service has been provided by the Outer South Area Committee and by charges to customers. The budget is on target, taking into account the extra costs that occur during the first quarter of the year.

Income	Outer South Area Committee	£23,000
	Client Charges to date	£4,345
TOTAL		£27,345
Expenditure	Delivery of Scheme to date	£18,400
Balance		£8,945

3.5 **Issues**

3.5.1 Garden Waste

Garden waste has ceased to be a significant problem due to the provision of the garden waste bins by Leeds City Council.

3.5.2 Staffing

A significant operational step made in 2009/10 has been the move away from cash payments and towards establishing standing orders or payment by cheque. This aims to reduce the safety hazards for the gardeners handling sums of cash.

3.5.3 Weather

The main difficulty experienced by the gardeners has been the difficult weather conditions, but they have not fallen behind on the schedules as Care and Repair Leeds have learnt from previous seasons and were able to be flexible on working patterns ensuring that clients received the first class service they have come to expect.

4.0 **Morley Elderly Action Scheme Monitoring Update**

4.1 In February 2008 the Area Committee commissioned Morley Elderly Action (MEA) to deliver a garden maintenance service in Morley and parts of Ardsley Robin Hood. The MEA scheme has operated for nearly 8 years and is carried out by local self employed gardeners. The service charge is £10 per hour and the gardeners then invoice MEA for the difference between the £10 and their hourly rate.

- 4.2 Gardeners act as eyes and ears in the community and report back any concerns about service users. MEA is a member of the Leeds Neighbourhood Network and as such provides within Greater Morley a full range of services and activities including Advocacy, Access to free legal advice, Access to money advice, Help accessing benefits, General Advice, Signposting, Delivering Meals on Wheels, Community Transport, Lunch Clubs, Social Activities. As a member of the Neighbourhood Network MEA make referrals to sister organisations, so through their scheme gardening service users outside Greater Morley would have a link to their own local 'Elderly Action' group. MEA also make referrals to City wide organisations and other bodies (e.g. Disability Service Team)
- 4.3 Referrals are made by way of MEA receiving approaches from residents, housing staff, appropriate agencies and local Councillors. The scheme for 2009/10 is targeted to service a minimum of 120 clients and to achieve 1,500 attended gardening hours. It is a year round scheme that offers routine garden maintenance during the normal growing season (lawn mowing, hedge trimming) and other gardening duties in the Autumn, late winter and early spring (lopping, pruning, elimination of tripping hazards).
- 4.4 Outcomes from the scheme align with the broad strategic outcomes compiled by Older Better, Adult Social Care, Primary Care Trust and Supporting People, and the annual survey includes questions relating to Well Being, Preventing Trips and Falls, and Feeling Safer in their own homes (preventing distraction burglary, and elimination rogue traders).
- 4.5 The project uses Area Committee funding to pay for MEA administration time to create a rota for otherwise self employed gardeners who then make prearranged visits to known customers. Satisfaction levels are high amongst customers of the scheme.
- 4.6 **Funding**
Income for the MEA scheme comes from the Area Committee Wellbeing Budget (£17,000) and customer charges. MEA have confirmed they are on target to spend on budget.
- 4.7 **Issues**
- 4.7.1 **Garden Waste**
Disposal of gardening waste is the responsibility of the self employed gardeners.
- 4.7.2 **Staffing**
No direct staffing implications apart from monitoring CRB checks for the self employed staff. Gardeners are not utilised without evidencing a CRB check to MEA. A complaints procedure is in place operated by MEA.
- 4.7.3 **Weather**
Poor weather conditions can make it extremely difficult to carry out work. However, this does not cause any direct cost to the MEA scheme and the self employed staff are able to be flexible in their working patterns.

5.0 A Single Service for Outer South

- 5.1 Reviewing the operation of both schemes in Spring 2009, highlighted issues regarding the rising costs of the service to the Area Committee and doubts about boundaries and areas of operation. The opportunity to develop a single service across the Outer Area was identified as a potential solution to tackle these issues. The main drivers for this were to find a more cost efficient service, so making better use of the Well being Budget and increased confidence that the whole Outer Area was being covered. Officers invited MEA and Care and Repair Leeds to scope a single proposal for Outer Area Committee consideration.
- 5.2 Care and Repair Leeds have confirmed that they will not be presenting a proposal to run a gardening service across the whole of the Outer South Area. An initial discussion has been held with Neil Lennox from Morley Elderly Action, who confirmed that if Morley Elderly Action deliver a garden maintenance scheme service that covers the whole of the Outer South, the existing gardeners within Care and Repair Leeds may become self employed and then could be receive work through the new single scheme. Care and Repair identify the continuation of a gardening service for the older and disabled residents of Rothwell as a vital service and needs to be assured.
- 5.3 Development of a single scheme has required MEA to consider organisational and governance changes to enable them to operate outside the old Morley Borough area. The MEA Management Committee gained the permission of the Charities Commission to change the Charitable Geographical Area of Benefit from 'The Greater Morley Area of Leeds' to Metropolitan Borough of Leeds, South Leeds Outer Area Committee. This permission was granted in February 2009 and ratified by members at the Annual General Meeting on 15th July 2009. The Management Committee are also at an advanced stage of preparation in forming a charitable Company Limited by Guarantee or other legal framework if this proved necessary.
- 5.4 A part time member of staff is trained who would be able to take sole responsibility for the administration of the scheme and their hours could be flexed up to take on a bigger workload if required.
- 5.5 If required for a single scheme, MEA would link with Care and Repair Leeds to receive a client list for the Rothwell area and where possible* to support the two newly, self employed gardeners to become a part of the single scheme.
- 5.6 Members are asked to approve continuation of officers working with MEA to develop a single scheme for the Outer South and liaise with Care and Repair Leeds regarding their organisation not being commissioned for 2010/11 to deliver a garden maintenance service. A further report will be presented to the November Area Committee providing further details of the single scheme and cost comparisons with commissioning two schemes.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 The garden maintenance service continues to be popular with older people and is clearly satisfying a need in the area. The service itself helps to promote independent living; increases the benefits of health and well being; provides the opportunity for residents to get out in the fresh air and sit in their garden; removes untidy gardens

which can reduce the risk of criminals identifying older and vulnerable residents; and decreases the likelihood of accidents through trips and slips in the garden.

- 6.2 Based on the positive outcomes of the scheme, the continuation of an Outer South garden maintenance service is likely to be a priority for the Area Committee in 2010/11. The development of a single scheme will ensure a service is continued for all areas of the Outer South and offer potential funding savings in the Well being Budget.

7.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

- 7.1 There are no direct implications for the above as a result of this report.

8.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications from this report.
- 8.2 The £40,000 revenue Well being Funding to deliver both garden maintenance services have already been approved from the 2009/10 Well being Budget. A future report on a gardening scheme for 2010/11 will have an impact on the Well being revenue Budget for 2010/11.

9.0 Recommendations

Members of the Outer South Area Committee are requested to:

- (a). Note the contents of this update report
- (b). Agree to Area Management continuing to develop on a single garden maintenance scheme for 2010/11 and to receive a further report in November that brings final details of a single scheme, including comparable costings with operating two schemes.

Background Reports

- Garden Maintenance Service, 9th February 2009
- Garden Maintenance Schemes, 25th February 2008
- Rothwell Gardening Scheme – Care & Repair, 20th February 2006