



Report of the Director of Environments & Neighbourhoods Directorate

South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 30th November 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 October Area Committee, Members received an update report on the delivery of the schemes to date and agreed to receive further details of a single scheme to operate from 2010/11. Members also requested funding proposals to continue to operate two schemes for the Outer South In 2010/11. However, one of the delivery organisations has declined to tender for the garden maintenance service in any form next year. Area Committee are requested to consider and agree to commission a single scheme for the whole of the Outer South in 2010/11.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline to Members a Garden Maintenance scheme that operates across the whole of the Outer South in 2010/11 and request Members to commission Morley Elderly Action to deliver the scheme.

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 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.
- 2.4 Members received an update report in September 2009 on the delivery of the schemes to date and outline details of an option for a single scheme to operate across the whole of the Outer South in 2010/11. Area Committee agreed for AMT to continue to work on developing a single scheme for the whole of the Outer South and requested that funding proposals also be presented for Members to compare the costs of operating two schemes against a single scheme in 2010/11.

3.0 Care & Repair Leeds

- 3.1 Area Management Team continue to support Care and Repair in the delivery of their 2009/10 garden maintenance service. AMT are currently facilitating work between Care and Repair and the LCC information and resources team, following a recent request from Members to undertake a mapping exercise of client locations.

3.2 The Director of Care and Repair Leeds has formally notified the Area Management Team that Care and Repair Leeds will not be tendering to deliver a garden maintenance scheme either in the Rothwell are or as a single scheme across the Outer South. The Director has confirmed that all the existing gardeners employed through Care and Repair are in the process of forming a social enterprise gardening company. Members of this company have met with the Operations Manager at Morley Elderly Action to discuss being employed through the single scheme, proposed by Morley Elderly Action. Benefits of this are that gardeners from the social enterprise company have good knowledge of the Rothwell area, excellent relationships already built up with clients and services to existing clients would be maintained.

4.0 Outer South Gardening Scheme 2010/11

- 4.1 The MEA scheme has operated for nearly 8 years and is carried out by local self employed gardeners. 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.
- 4.2 The single scheme would use their existing regular visit maintenance gardening model, but take it across the whole of the Outer South area for economies of scale, the gardening scheme is seen as a year round project with the bulk of the work being done in the extended summer growing season. Winter would be used to get a head start on lopping, pruning, and general garden maintenance including preventing trips and falls by straightening flagstones, mending fences, creating raised flower beds etc, all aimed at keeping people living independently at home.
- 4.3 The project would use the existing methods of costing in the admin time to create a rota for otherwise self employed gardeners who then make prearranged visits to known customers to do simple but effective gardening tasks i.e. mowing, pruning and hedge trimming. The gardens will always look cared for and so will prevent trips and falls, deter opportunist rogue gardeners from overcharging the elderly, prevent distraction burglary opportunities, promote a feeling of well being and provide a human contact for the lonely and isolated. A subsidised hourly service charge will be made to the service user by the gardener and the gardener will invoice Morley Elderly Action monthly for the difference between the subsidised charge and their normal hourly rate. Morley Elderly Action will provide a part time member of staff to supervise and administer the scheme and to provide the Outer South Area Committee with monitoring as specified and required.
- 4.4 Referrals are made by way of MEA receiving approaches from residents, housing staff, appropriate agencies and local Councillors. The scheme for 2010/11 will be targeted to service a minimum of 240 clients and to achieve 3000 attended gardening hours. Residents wishing to receive the garden maintenance service do not have to become subscribed members of Morley Elderly Action to sign up to the scheme.

4.5 **Geography**

The new single scheme will be branded, 'Outer South Leeds Gardening Scheme' and will operate across all four wards of Ardsley and Robin Hood, Morley North, Morley South and Rothwell

4.6 **Funding**

MEA request an annual contribution of £33,000 for three years from the Outer South Area Committee, to deliver a garden maintenance scheme from April 2010 to March 2013.

The service charge for 2010/11 is to be held at £10 per hour. The gardeners will then invoice MEA for the difference between the £10 and their hourly rate, this is a subsidy of £4.50. The proposal expects to deliver 3000 hours of maintenance to residents across the Outer South.

Project Costs 2010/11

Expenditure		Income	
Gardeners (3000 x £14.50)	£43,500	Clients Charges (3000 x £10)	£30,000
Admin salary and on costs	£11,500	Outer South Area Committee	£33,000
Management Fee including overheads for IT, utilities.	£8,000		
	£63,000		£63,000

Project Costs 2011/12

Expenditure		Income	
Gardeners (3000 x £15.50)	£46,500	Clients Charges (3000 x £11)	£33,000
Admin salary and on costs	£11,500	Outer South Area Committee	£33,000
Management Fee including overheads for IT, utilities.	£8,000		
	£66,000		£66,000

Project Costs 2012/13

Expenditure		Income	
Gardeners (3000 x £16.50)	£49,500	Clients Charges (3000 x £12)	£36,000
Admin salary and on costs	£11,500	Outer South Area Committee	£33,000
Management Fee including overheads for IT, utilities.	£8,000		
	£69,000		£69,000

- 4.7 If a three year agreement is secured, MEA would hold all internal costs of staff hours and overheads to the fixed price and therefore hold the annual funding contribution from the Outer South Area Committee to £33,000 in year one . The three year agreement is requested to guarantee service and security of contracts to clients, gardeners and Morley Elderly Action as project managers. However, this formula may not satisfy any likely increase requested by the self employed gardeners and this element will have to be addressed by an annual service charge review. Indicative figures are stated above but, subject to any review.
- 4.8 **Garden Waste**
Disposal of gardening waste is the responsibility of the self employed gardeners.
- 4.9 **Staffing**
No direct staffing implications apart from monitoring CRB checks for the self employed staff. Gardeners are not commissioned without evidencing a CRB check to MEA. A complaints procedure is in place operated by MEA.
- 4.10 **Weather**
Poor weather conditions can make it extremely difficult to undertake garden maintenance work, however, this does not cause any direct cost to the MEA scheme as the self employed staff are able to be flexible in their working patterns.
- 4.11 **Outcomes**
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 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 are able to 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)

The service will provide 3000 hours of garden maintenance service to the over 60's and disabled across the Outer South. Direct assistance through the scheme and signposting work outlined above both support vulnerable members of society to continue to live independently at home.

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).

Under the Health and Well being Themes of the Outer South Area Committee Area Delivery Plan, Members have identified 'supporting people to live independently in their own homes longer', as a priority. The project also support the Leeds Strategic Plan improvement priorities 'Improved quality of life through maximising the potential of vulnerable people by promoting independence, dignity and respect' and 'Enhanced safety and support for vulnerable people through preventative and protective action to minimise risks and well being'.

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Based on the positive outcomes of the scheme, the continuation of an Outer South garden maintenance service is a priority for the Area Committee as detailed in the Area Delivery Plan. The commissioning 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.

6.0 Implications For Council Policy and Governance

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

7.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications from this report.
- 7.2 Subject to Executive Board approval of future revenue Well being Budgets, the £33,000 revenue funding requested to deliver an annual garden maintenance scheme will have an impact on the Area Committee's 2010-2013 revenue Well being Budgets.

8.0 Recommendations

Members of the Outer South Area Committee are requested to:

- (a). Note the contents of this update report
- (b). Area Committee funding, to deliver a garden maintenance service to vulnerable residents across the four Outer South wards in 2010-13, to be considered in the Well being Budget Report, subject to future approval by the Executive Board of revenue Well being Budgets.

Background Reports

- Garden Maintenance Service 19th October 2009
- Garden Maintenance Service 9th February 2009
- Garden Maintenance Schemes 25th February 2008
- Rothwell Gardening Scheme – Care & Repair 20th February 2006