



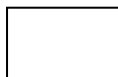
Report of the Director of City Development

Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 5th October 2010

Subject: Cemeteries and Crematoria Horticultural Maintenance

Electoral Wards Affected:



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

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Community Cohesion

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Narrowing the Gap

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Executive Summary

1. Parks and Countryside is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 23 cemeteries and 22 closed churchyards. Horticulture maintenance activities include grass cutting (including ornamental lawns), hedges, formal beds and weed control.
2. The average overall spend on parks and open spaces for Leeds is nearly £2,200 per hectare less than the average of the other core cities and 7th lowest out of 8, whilst in terms of satisfaction Leeds is second highest.
3. The budget for maintenance of cemeteries in 2010/11 is £514,760. There are 16 site based gardeners in place at Cottingley, Harehills, Holbeck, Hunslet, Garforth, Lawnswood and Rothwell.
4. In relation to the Leeds Quality Parks standard, overall improvements have been noted in 15 out of the 21 sites assessed, representing 71%, however there is an estimated investment requirement of £550k to bring all sites up to standard in addition to building works.
5. There is an impact on maintenance when amenity grass in existing cemeteries is converted to grave plots. Around 2.3 hectares (approximately 6,000 additional plots) was added over a 10 year period which now requires more resource intensive maintenance.
6. It is estimated that 25% of grave areas do not conform to Grave Conditions which causes particular maintenance problems.
7. Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

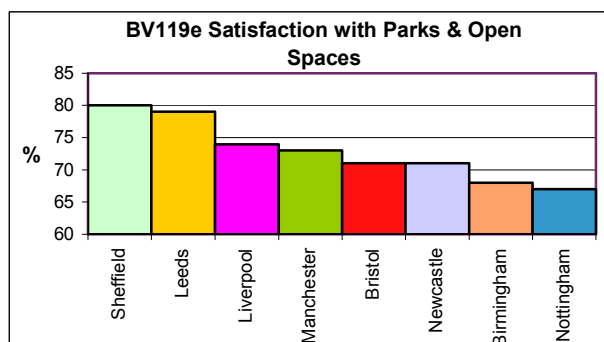
- 1.1 This report outlines the context and arrangements for horticultural maintenance of cemeteries and crematoria in Leeds.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has one of the largest fully inclusive local authority Parks and Countryside services, managing almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 167 community parks and recreation grounds, and 383 acres of local green space, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to 600 events annually. We also manage 96 allotment sites, almost 800km of PROW, and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 22 cemeteries and 3 crematoria.
- 2.2 Staff in Parks and Countryside are predominately front line. Analysis undertaken for the 'DECATS' project (Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services) undertaken in early 2010 identified 611 FTE in the service, of which over 90% are consider front line service delivery staff.
- 2.3 On a per hectare basis, the average spend for Leeds is nearly £2,200 per hectare less than the average of the other core cities as can be observed from the following table¹:

Core City	£ / hectare
Manchester	10,159
Newcastle	7,484
Birmingham	6,383
Sheffield	5,441
Liverpool	5,398
Bristol	4,775
Leeds	3,784
Nottingham	2,302

- 2.4 Whilst the average spend per hectare is considerably less than the other core cities, in terms of satisfaction, Leeds compares well. This is illustrated below using the same data source as in 2.3.



- 2.5 The Leeds Quality Parks scheme is based on the Green Flag Award Scheme which represents the national standard for parks and green spaces. The relevant criteria assessed are as follows:

¹ Source: Value for Money Profiles 2009 produced by the Audit Commission

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe & secure
- Clean & well maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation & heritage
- Community involvement

- 2.6 In Leeds, the standard is used to assess a representative sample of 146 parks and green spaces over a 3 year period, which includes all city, country and community parks along with cemeteries and crematoria sites. It should be noted that the award is a measure of a well managed site, not excellence in every respect.
- 2.7 This data is used to assess performance against a local indicator for Parks and Countryside based on 'the percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed that meet the Green Flag standard'. The result in 2009/10 was 23.4% against a target of 21%; the target in 2010/11 is 23% rising to 27% in 2012/13.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Leeds is a statutory burial and cremation authority, and the Parks and Countryside service is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 23 cemeteries and 22 closed churchyards.
- 3.2 The horticultural features maintained at these sites can be summarised below:

Asset Type	Hectares
Graveyard Grass	79.9
Amenity Grass	8.4
Design Grass	8.1
Formal Beds	4.6
Total	101.0

- 3.3 There is also approx. 6km of hedges maintained, along with flower beds, hard surface areas, and litter bins.
- 3.4 Horticulture maintenance activities include grass cutting (including ornamental lawns), hedges, formal beds and weed control. General grass is cut approximately every 3 weeks and shrubs are pruned annually during winter. Design grass areas are given more intensive maintenance. A summary of the main operations are indicated below.

Asset Type	Operation
Graveyard Grass	Delitter Area
	Cut Grass
	Strim Perimeter and Obstacles
Amenity Grass	Cut Grass
Design Grass	Cut and Scarify Grass
	Apply Fungicide, Mosskiller and Wormkiller
	Apply Selective Herbicide
	Apply Fine Turf Fertiliser
Formal Beds	Weed / Delitter Bed
	Apply Residual Herbicide
	Prune Bed
	Fork Bed

- 3.5 Tree maintenance activities are carried out on a reactive basis and prioritised according to available budget. The budget for 2010/11 is £20,160 for which work is reactive and only represents reported problems with individual trees.
- 3.6 The budget for maintenance of cemeteries in 2010/11 is £514,760. A summary of costs in relation to the budget is indicated below.

	£
Labour	390,369
Machinery and Equipment	46,858
Materials and overheads (including vehicles, waste disposal, small tools, protective clothing, administration and support)	77,533
Total	514,760

- 3.7 The decision in 2008 to increase charges for burials included an allocation of additional resources for horticultural maintenance. This enabled the recruitment of 3 site based gardeners at Cottingley, Holbeck and Rothwell in addition to 13 site based gardeners already in place at Harehills, Hunslet, Garforth, Lawnswood and Rawdon. Other sites are maintained by area parks based staff who also carry out maintenance on parks, recreation grounds and open spaces on a route basis. This staffing input represents an additional 4.3 FTE.
- 3.8 The Leeds Quality Parks assessment commenced in 2004, and 21 cemeteries and crematoria sites have been assessed on two occasions allowing comparisons to be made. Overall improvements have been noted in 15 out of the 21 sites assessed, representing 71%. It should be noted however that as at the end of the 2009 assessments there were no cemeteries and crematoria sites that met the Leeds Quality Parks standard. It is estimated that the cost, excluding building works, to bring cemeteries and crematoria sites up to the Leeds Quality Park standard is around £550k.
- 3.9 Comparative data for horticultural maintenance of cemeteries and crematoria is not currently available, but an exercise was conducted regionally and presented to scrutiny in April 2003, which illustrates the comparative cost of maintenance.

Local Authority	Total Area of Cemetery Grounds	Cost of Grounds Maintenance per Hectare
	Hectares	£ ²
Bradford	74	5,594
Hull	55.4	7,249
Sheffield	85	4,007
Wakefield	53	8,819
Average Cost		6,417
Leeds	98.5	4,322

- 3.10 Further information was also presented that illustrated the impact on maintenance converting amenity grass in existing cemeteries to grave plots. An area of around 2.3 hectares (approximately 6,000 additional plots) was added which now requires

² Based on 2001 rates

more resource intensive maintenance. An assessment of the impact of this was undertaken, based on industry standard rates using "PSA Schedule of Rates for Landscape Management". Based on these rates for "general grave maintenance" (not including headstone), the increased maintenance cost over this 10 year period represented £49,800 per annum. Assuming 600 grave plots are allocated each year, there is therefore an ongoing additional budget pressure of £4,980 plus inflation year on year.

- 3.11 A further issue more difficult to quantify relates to grave conditions that clearly state "railings, footstones, kerb and border stones, chains or other structures enclosing graves or parts of graves, flags or chippings are not allowed". A policy of enforcement used to be undertaken, but following a number of cases in the media, enforcement action does not tend to happen where the grave area is maintained by the family concerned.
- 3.12 Enclosing graves in the manner outlined above causes particular maintenance problems as it can prevent access to machines on adjoining graves as well as increase in complaints relating to adjoining plots and damage to maintenance equipment. This results in staff having to use hand tools (such as strimmers) to carry out the necessary maintenance which is clearly more labour intensive and therefore more costly than using large machinery. It is estimated that 25% of grave areas do not conform to Grave Conditions.
- 3.13 Grave centres also pose additional maintenance burdens on grave areas no longer maintained by families. This can include overgrown shrubs that require additional attention by parks staff.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 That members note the contents of the above report.

5.0 Background Papers

- 5.1 Report of Director of Leisure Services to Scrutiny Board (Leisure and Enterprise) April 2003