

Report of the Area Leader – South East Leeds

Report to South (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 25th March 2013

Subject: Outer South Gardening & Advice Service

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
	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? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

In 2011/12 Morley Elderly Action (MEA) delivered the final year of a three year garden maintenance scheme and an evaluation report was presented at the 15th October 2012 Area Committee meeting. Members determined the requirement for a discussion with the Manager of Morley Elderly Action at its November meeting and subsequently requested the Area Leader to investigate alternative schemes for comparability and provide area committee with options for consideration by the new financial year.

Recommendations

1. The Committee is asked to note the content of the report.
2. The Committee is asked to consider the options detailed in Section 6 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 meeting of the Area 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 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 Morley Elderly Action at a cost of £33,000 per year for three years was approved.
- 2.5 In 2011/12 Morley Elderly Action (MEA) delivered the final year of a three year garden maintenance scheme and an evaluation report was presented at the 15th October 2012 Area Committee. Members determined the requirement for a discussion with the Manager of Morley Elderly Action at its November meeting and subsequently requested the Area Leader to investigate alternative schemes for comparability and provide area committee with options for consideration for the new financial year.

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 risk for a group of vulnerable residents in the Outer South Area.
- 3.2 The Outer South Area 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. 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 Only one gardening services provider is listed on the Kirklees website. It is a not for profit company that in addition to gardening services delivers cleaning, plumbing and electrical services. Costs start from £15 per hour and provide for mowing, lawn treatment, beds and shrubbery, leaf and litter clearance, patio cleaning, fencing, planting and soft landscaping.

4.2 Leeds City Council

4.2.1 Leeds City Council also offers a signposting service through the 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 -

Company	Charge
Company A	£15 per hour. Quote provided for larger jobs
Company B	No reply
Company C	No reply
Company D	No longer providing garden service
Company E	North Leeds only
Company F	Does not work on hourly rate, free quotes provided
Company G	Does not work on hourly rate, free quotes provided

4.2.2 None of the companies A-G answered the telephone using their company name. It is not known at the time of writing whether the staff of these companies are CRB vetted.

4.3 Swarcliffe Gardening Scheme funded by Outer East Area Committee,

4.3.1 In 2012, the Outer East Area Committee provided £20,000 of funding for a 6 month scheme which operated from 1 April to 30 September. Swarcliffe Good Neighbours operated the scheme covering all four wards of the Outer East Area.

4.3.2 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.

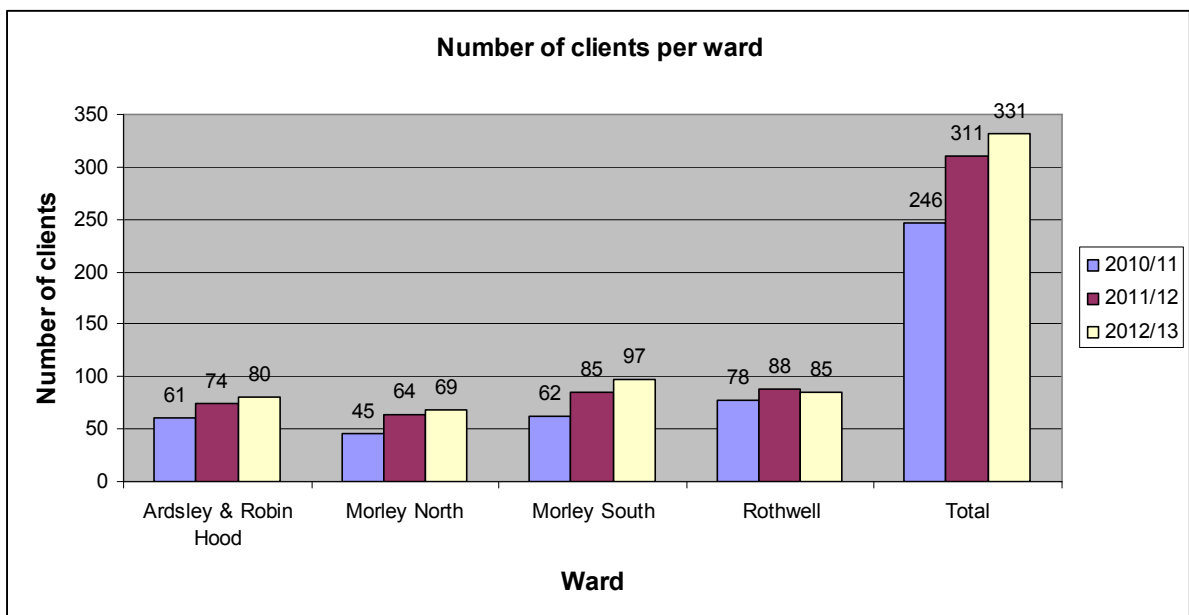
4.3.3 The target for the period under consideration was 400 gardens. 442 gardens had been maintained by the end of the scheme. These gardens consisted of 273 free contributions and 169 paid for follow-up contributions. Management costs are typically of the order of 10%.

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

4.4.1 Outer North West Area Committee provide a small amount of funding to support a garden maintenance scheme operated by Horsforth Live at Home Scheme. The scheme covers only 57 gardens in a small area. It is not comparable to the Outer South area scheme but is included for information.

4.5 Morley Elderly Action - Current Service Provider funded by Outer South Area Committee

4.5.1 In February 2010, 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. 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 246 in the first year to 331 in the final year of the scheme. The ward split is illustrated in the table below.



4.5.2 **Appendix 1** details the range of services MEA provides to its garden maintenance service users. To ensure area wide based coverage of the additional services provided by MEA, strong links have been developed with Rothwell & District Live at Home Scheme. Customers outside the Morley area are signposted to Rothwell & District Live at Home Scheme for these additional services.

4.5.3 In their recent submission for future delivery, MEA has outlined a series of options which are summarised in **Appendix 2**. The management fee has been reduced by 50% to 12% of grant value across all options and the bulk of this fee is operational costs rather than costs to fund management per se.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 This review requested by Area 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. The Swarcliffe Scheme is arguably the closest in nature to the current gardening scheme operating in the Outer South Area. 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 the only way to assure that value for money is being secured. Officers have requested quotations for service delivery to gauge the efficacy of a tendering exercise. At the time of writing these quotations are not available.
- 5.3 Nevertheless, given that management fees have been reduced by MEA and that several options have now been offered by the provider, Area Committee is requested to consider options for future service delivery and direct officers to conduct follow up work as appropriate.

6.0 Options for future service delivery

- 6.1 Area Committee is requested to consider the following options:
- (a) discontinue the garden service;
 - (b) continue with the garden service operated by MEA and identify a favoured option from their offer (**Appendix 2**);
 - (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 Area Committee Business Plan. The production of this Business Plan 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 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 Area 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, given that management fees have been reduced by MEA and that several options have now been offered by the provider, Area 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 Area Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.
- 9.2 The Area 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 documents¹**
- 10.1 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.

Morley Elderly Action Specification	MEA Client charge* £11.00
Garden service which includes:	
• All gardeners CRB checked	
• Hedge cutting	
• Grass cutting	
• Planting	
• Weeding/weed control	
• Welfare benefits information and help to accessing	
• Advocacy	
• Access to local trades and services guide	
• Liaison with the police and fire service	
• Administration support	
• Morley wheels, a voluntary transport scheme	
• Help in accessing social activities	
• General help and advice	
• Tea room open everyday	
• Lunch clubs	
• Walking group	
• Computer workshop	
• Men's group	
• Craft group	
• Friendship group	
• Bingo group	
• Weekly coffee morning in the Town Hall	
• Welfare benefits information and help in accessing them	
• Access to local trades and services guide	

* MEA clients pay £11 per hour for the gardening service. Through the funding provided by Outer South Area Committee gardeners receive £15 per hour. The £4.00 subsidy covers additional gardener costs such as travel, administration, equipment and maintenance, insurance and costs of CRB

Morley Elderly Action Proposals for Service Delivery 2013-16

Offer	Free Hours (Hours)	Client Subsidy (£ per hour)	Total Gardening Hours delivered (Hours)	MEA's comments
1	0	4	4,375	MEA's preferred option
2	1 to existing customers only	4	3,250	Based on 300 existing customers
3	1 to existing and new customers	4	3,062	Based on 300 existing customers and 50 new ones
4	0	5	3,500	To reduce the cost to the customer to £10 per hour
5	0	4	4,375	To reduce the cost to customer to £10, £4 subsidy, the gardener receives £14 per hour instead of £15 per hour
6	1 to existing customers only	4	3,250	Reduce the cost to the customer to £10, £4 subsidy to gardener, the gardener gets £14 per hour instead of £15, plus free hour