

**Report of: Helen Freeman, Chief Officer, Environmental Action Service**

**Report to: Outer North East Community Committee**

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## **Environmental Action Service – Locality Team Update**

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### **Purpose of report**

1. The reason for this report is to update the Committee and public on how improvements will be made to a range of environmental services that are delivered locally.
2. The report will describe how the services will continue to be delivered as normal this year whilst the changes are made. This includes the continuation of the current Outer North East Service Level Agreement (SLA) that covers street cleaning and environmental enforcement/regulatory work undertaken by the Locality Team.

### **Main issues**

3. As previously reported to the Committee (17/3/14), discussed at Environmental Sub Group and at ward member meetings, a citywide review of environmental services across the Environment and Housing Directorate has taken place.
4. This review recommended bringing together separately managed environmental services under a Locality Team model. In particular those previously undertaken by the ex-Arms Length Housing Management Organisations (known as ALMOs).
5. Reductions at senior management level have already taken place across the services involved; contributing towards the 20% reduction in senior management costs across the council to help meet budget pressures.
6. The next phase is to redesign the operational work so it can be managed by the reduced layer of managers.

7. The list of services that are being designed into the new Locality Team service are:
  - a. **Existing Locality Team work** – e.g. street cleaning (LCC highways paths and roads), litter bins, flytip investigations and removal, environmental enforcement and regulatory work.
  - b. **De-leafing** – currently managed by each locality team but undertaken by additional staff bought in for the autumn months.
  - c. **Graffiti removal, needle picking, public toilet cleaning, ginnel clearance, LCC bin-yard clearance** – all currently small city wide crews managed by a nominated locality but need embedding into roles of each locality team
  - d. **Household bulky item collection service** – the management recently moved to SSE Locality Team to oversee - the delivery and management now needs dividing out between the 3 localities.
  - e. **Work largely done by Estate Caretakers in council housing areas** – the work and expectation varies considerably across localities because of different approaches taken by the separate ALMOs. Elements that would be delivered by Locality Teams would include: clearance of void gardens (when a house becomes empty and is being prepared for the next tenant), cleaning of non-highway paths (incl. ginnels) and open spaces on estates, assistance with gritting around vulnerable tenant properties, helping keep access roads and paths behind council owned shops and multi-occupancy properties clean, supporting community action days. The Locality Team will NOT be doing work inside void properties.
8. The redesign of the Locality Team service will complement the Council's grounds maintenance contract (overseen by Parks and Countryside and currently contracted to Continental Landscapes). The contract includes litter picking of identified LCC grassed and shrub areas prior to each cut – and so contributes significantly to the environmental condition of our neighbourhoods. However, the work is seasonal – and therefore provides a challenge to the Locality Team for grassed/shrub areas during non-cutting season (i.e. between October and February).
9. Similarly the new service will complement the work undertaken by Civic Enterprise Leeds (CEL) who are responsible for the cleanliness of council owned multi-storey flats and other LCC multi-occupancy properties and their grounds.
10. There has been an extensive period of consultation and involvement of all staff, unions, Members and Environmental Sub Groups; together with learning from customer complaints/feedback, tenant surveys and other community forums/contacts.
11. The Housing Revenue Account has funded an additional “hotspot” crew for the area which has

Figure 1: The trial of a hotspot crew working with an enforcement officer has received good feedback



seen a small team of staff working flexibly together on a rota basis in neighbourhoods where the existing resource is struggling to make a difference (mainly in the inner areas). This has been well received by Members, the public/tenants and staff themselves.

12. Some important principles/learning has emerged from this which will be addressed in the new service. These include:

- a. Members and the public want a **7 day service** to continue – people fill litter bins at weekends and some parts have localised weekend economies to support (e.g. Wetherby Town Centre).
- b. Currently there is **too much lone working** – meaning some staff working a 10 hour shift alone, starting very early in the morning (i.e. from 6am). In winter months this can also mean working in the pitch black and in poor weather conditions.
- c. Street Attendants who mainly litter pick are not only working on their own the majority of the time – but also **don't have all the tools** available to adequately sweep/clean streets on their “beat”. They are often just armed with a litter grabber and a supply of bags.
- d. Although significant reductions in spend have been made since the establishment of Locality Teams – there remains an **over reliance on overtime to cover absences**.
- e. Having one person on a shift supervising and coordinating the daily work of an operational service covering a third of the city (pop of over 210,000 and larger than the city of York) **does not achieve the levels of support, quality assurance and supervision necessary** to ensure staff are working to full capacity. It does not support quality 121s and appraisals.
- f. There are **too many different job descriptions** and variations to contracted hours in place which can make it difficult for staff to work flexibly and feel fairly treated. This will be further complicated by the addition of the current Estate Caretaker group of staff.
- g. We need to be able to **better adapt to local factors** that have an influence on environmental conditions. For example, parked cars in the town and village streets preventing how we currently clean streets from being effective.
- h. LCC **tenant satisfaction** will be a key performance indicator; given the Housing Revenue Account (i.e. the tenants' rent) will contribute towards the funding of the service.
- i. Making **better use of opportunities in the community** to drive and deliver changes to how people manage their waste. Including **improving recycling rates/reducing landfill costs**.



Figure 2: Street Attendants currently work alone and with little practical equipment or assistance.



Figure 3: Mechanical sweepers can't get to the road sides in some village streets



Figure 4: We would like to work more with schools and community groups

13. The service delivery model that has been developed introduces a zonal approach across the city within each Locality Team.
14. In Outer North East this will mean the establishment of its own zonal team covering the three wards exclusively.
15. The zonal team will have its own operational staff (all on the same core job description), overseen by a dedicated operational charge-hand on each shift. The zonal team will have its own enforcement staff (Environmental Action Officer) and mechanical pathsweeper too.
16. Outer North East also benefits from “Village Caretakers/Lengthsman” that parishes such as Alwoodley employ. We would like to work very closely with them so they feel part of the zonal “team” and be supported in their work.
17. A dedicated Team Leader will be responsible for the Outer North East team. They will be responsible for making sure the zonal resources available in the area are being used to best effect and will be the local point of contact for Members and other professionals, such as the Police’s Partnership Working Area Inspectors and local housing managers.
18. In Outer North East the Team Leader will also be expected to develop positive and supportive relationships with Town and Parish Councils and community organisations/action groups that play a big part in helping maintain and improve the environment of our neighbourhoods (e.g. in-bloom and “friends of” groups).
19. The gully crew for the East North East locality will remain in the Environmental Action Service, but together with the other two locality’s crews and the city centre/”wetspots” crew will be managed by a single Team Manager.
20. At the time of writing this report the Director has published a Delegated Decision Notice approving the first phase of the restructure – which includes all non-operational level posts. An update will be provided at the meeting on the status of the DDN. The intention is to approve the second phase late October.
21. There will be recruitment to the new service through the normal processes of a restructure. It is hoped that this can be completed by December and have the new service operational early in 2015.
22. In the meantime it is important to note that the Locality Team and Estate Caretaking services will continue to run and deliver what they currently do. As changes have already been made at Senior Management level to reduce management levels/costs, some line management/reporting adjustments will need to be made.
23. In terms of the Community Committee’s Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Locality Team, the Committee was consulted at its March 2014, using the same

principles and priorities identified in the 2013/14 SLA. As no issues have been raised, the intention is to continue for the remainder of 2014/15 with this existing SLA.

24. The SLA will be reviewed and rewritten to include the new elements of the service for 2015/16. The work to do this will be coordinated through the Committee's Environmental Sub Group, with recommendations presented to the Community Committee early in the 2015/16 municipal year.
25. The ward member meetings will be used to discuss operational details relating to how the zonal team will work in each ward.

## **Conclusion**

26. The introduction of a new, locality focused service for Street Cleaning and Enforcement across Leeds has been widely regarded as a success. The delegation of resources to a Locality Manager to manage and to be accountable for the use of that resource through a Service Level Agreement with each Area (now Community) Committee is a key element of that.
27. Corporately there has been a commitment to learn from this success/model.
28. As a Directorate, we have taken the opportunity presented by the bringing back of ex-ALMO staff and resource into the Council to review how the environmental services delivered across the Directorate could be brought together under one service, at locality level. This has allowed us to achieve managerial level efficiencies.
29. This has also allowed us to review supervisory and operational elements of the existing Locality Team service that feedback and experience tells us are not working as effectively as they could.
30. The new model brings all this together and increases service influence and public accountability at a local level.
31. The SLA for 2015/16 will provide the Community Committee with increased responsibilities and greater influence over more resources.

## **Recommendations**

32. The Community Committee is asked to:
  - a. approve the continuation of the existing SLA for the 2014/15 municipal year;
  - b. note the proposals for new services to be added to existing ones to form a new Locality Team service; delivered through an Inner North East zonal team operational from early 2015;

- c. note the development of a new, enhanced SLA (for 2015/16) to be coordinated through the Committee's Environmental Sub Group and then presented to the Community Committee with their recommendations..

### **Background information**

- **Environmental Services SLA 2013/14 (document available by contacting the author or online)**
- **Environmental Services – Consultation on the 2014/15 Service Level Agreement (see report to Area Committee meeting of 17th March 2014)**