



Report of the Director of Environments & Neighbourhoods Directorate

South Leeds (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 25th February 2008

Subject: Care & Repair Leeds: Garden Maintenance Service Report

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ardsley & Robin Hood
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 Garden Maintenance Service has been operating in Rothwell, Robin Hood, Woodlesford and Lofthouse for the past 17 months with 708 visits carried out. This report provides an update on the scheme and issues that have arisen. Care & Repair Leeds have identified the need to address the issue of disposing of green waste and to obtain extra funding to support the continuation of the service.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Garden Maintenance Service project commissioned by the Area Committee and to consider future sustainability and funding.

2.0 Background

2.1 The garden maintenance service started in July 2006, covering the Rothwell, Robin Hood, Woodlesford and Lofthouse areas of Leeds. It is targeted at people aged 60 and over and disabled people. The service is carried out by a full-time gardener employed by Care & Repair and assisted by a part-time, temporary gardening assistant.

- 2.2 The service offers basic garden maintenance, including hedge and lawn cutting, weeding and general tidying. A charge is made to each customer. Initially this was based on a charge of £10 per hour, but this was changed to a charge per job because of the variety of sizes of gardens and amount of work needed.
- 2.3 Between July 2006 and the end of October 2007 a total of 708 visits were carried out to 95 customers. The original business plan stated that 50 gardens would be treated in year 1 and 75 in year 2. In actual fact, 56 customers received the service in year 1 and 95 in year 2.
- 2.4 All of the customers have been very pleased with the service and wish to be included in the scheme next year.

3.0 Funding

- 3.1 The funding for the service has been provided by the Outer South Area Committee of Leeds City Council and Greenfingers Leeds (run through Leeds Social Services), and by charges to customers.
- 3.2 The Area Committee agreed to support the Garden Maintenance Scheme with the following breakdown over three years. The table also details funds agreed:

Year	Amount Commissioned
2006/2007	£15,850
2007/2008	£14,050
2008/2009	£13,050
TOTAL	£42,950

3.3 Funding July 2006 to November 2007

1. Funding Received:	Greenfingers Leeds	£14,600
	Area Committee	£22,875
	Customer charges	£10,656
	TOTAL	£48,131
2. Expenditure:	Staff Costs	£22,444
	Equipment/Van Costs	£11,012
	Administration	£2,076
	Premises/telephone	£4,449
	Recruitment	£1,111
	Publicity/Printing	£259
	TOTAL	£41,351

3.4 Estimates from December 2007 to April 2008

Estimated Income: £48,131 + £7,025

TOTAL £55,156

Estimated Costs: £41,351 +

Emily's salary from 1/11/07 to 31/3/08 £7,136 (reduced winter hours)

Admin/premises/publicity/printing £2,500

TOTAL £50,987

Carry Forward £4,169

3.5 The Gardening Service will have just about broken even by April 2008.

3.6 **Estimated Income and Costs for 2008/09**

Estimated Income for 2008/09

Carry Forward from 2007/2008	£4,169
Greenfingers Leeds	£1,000
Area Committee	£13,050
Estimated Customer charges	£7,000
TOTAL	£25,219

Estimated Costs of running service for 2008/09:

Staff Costs	£21,000
Equipment/Van Costs	£4,000 (If a vehicle is obtained)
Administration/Premises/telephone	£3,000
Recruitment	£0
Publicity/Printing	£200
TOTAL	£28,200

3.7 There is funding shortfall of £2,981 if the Gardening Service is to break even by April 2009.

4.0 **Issues**

4.1 Garden waste

Problems arose during 2007 with the disposal of the high volumes of garden waste. In order to avoid the extra costs of dumping the waste for composting at Council recycling centres (the service was going to be charged commercial rates), a temporary agreement was reached allowing the waste to be placed at the Council site in Rothwell. A permanent solution needs to be found for 2008. The projected costings for 2008 shown above assume there will be no charge for garden waste disposal. This issue will be referred to the Cleaner Neighbourhoods Sub Group.

4.2 Staffing

The amount of work that was required, often in large gardens, necessitated the employment of a temporary part-time gardening assistant. This will be needed again in 2008 and this has been included in the costings above.

4.3 Vehicle

Further attempts are being made to obtain a vehicle for the service. The charges for hiring a vehicle have been very high, and attempts are now being made to obtain funding from outside the current funders to purchase a second-hand vehicle.

4.4 Weather

The long period of very wet weather made it extremely difficult to carry out the work, and the staff often worked in very difficult circumstances.

4.5 Costs

It is proving to be very difficult to provide long term financial stability for the service. The costs of providing the service outweigh the income that can be achieved through charges to customers. This problem is being experienced by all of the gardening services that are being run for older people throughout Leeds. The projected costs for running the service for 2008 shown above have been pruned to a minimum, but the projected budget still needs a further £2,981 to balance.

4.5 The high level of demand was not envisaged and there is a waiting list for the service of at least 20 dwellings. The original forecast for the amount of equipment, staff time and maintenance costs was based on a lower level of take up from residents. To allow the scheme to continue and build on its successful start, staff capacity, equipment and maintenance levels need to be increased.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The service has proved to be extremely popular with older people and is clearly satisfying a need for a gardening service in the area. 95 people received the service during 2007 and this could rise to at least 100 in 2008.

5.2 It is recommended that the Area Committee consider allocating an additional £2,981 to meet the increased costs as a result of the high level of demand for the service.

5.3 The issue raised regarding garden waste disposal need to be resolved through discussions between Area Management and Care & Repair Leeds. A report will be presented at the February Area Committee on recommendations on how the Area Committee can support solutions.

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 The Well being Budget will be reduced by £2,981 to support the additional costs incurred by the garden maintenance scheme.

8.0 Recommendations

Members of the Outer South Area Committee are requested to:

- (a). Note the contents of this report
- (b). Agree to allocate additional funding of £2,981.00 to continue the Garden Maintenance Service scheme this year.