

Report of Chief Officer Parks and Countryside

Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board

Date: 10th December 2012

Subject: Co-ordination Between Parks and Countryside and Environmental Action Services

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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

1. The management of the streetscene grounds maintenance contract has transferred to Parks and Countryside enabling closer co-ordination of weed spraying activities with the grounds maintenance contract, a consistent approach to monitoring, along with an holistic approach to horticultural land management.
2. Traffic management arrangements have been co-ordinated to minimise disruption and costs associated with closing part of the carriageway for horticultural and cleansing operations.
3. Litter collection is co-ordinated in the vicinity of community parks, and as part of normal operations site based gardeners undertake an initial litter pick of the park which is being expanded to include some areas outside the curtilage of the park. Conversely, street cleansing staff now assist with emptying litter bins in parks on a weekend when parks staff are not always present.
4. There are occasions when events either planned or weather related can mean that more work is required afterwards. More recently, co-ordinated working has resulted in a more comprehensive approach with staff from both services working together, including following the Leeds Asian Mela, West Indian Carnival, Woodhouse Moor and Wetherby Wilderness Car Park.
5. Work is underway to map all maintainable ginnels and establish work requirements to draw up an annual co-ordinated work schedule. Work is already co-ordinated to

undertake weed-spraying where the locality team have already cut back vegetation, and removed detritus from the surface of the path. A new initiative is for Parks and Countryside to apply a detergent to loosen moss from pavements combined with the locality team using path sweepers to clean the pavements once treatment is complete.

6. Locality Managers have led on consultation and worked with Parks and Countryside on developing proposals around dog control orders in Leeds. Parks and Countryside have also worked with Ward Members, enforcement officers, PCSOs and the police to undertake education and enable better intelligence gathering on dog fouling.
7. The Parks and Countryside service has a number of welfare facilities and yard space available in most community parks distributed throughout the city which has provided an opportunity for the locality based teams to use these facilities for staff welfare provision and as operational bases.

Recommendations

8. That members note the content of the report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report considers the progress made in co-ordinating Environmental Action Services with Parks and Countryside, along with further plans to improve the way services are co-ordinated in a way that utilises resources more effectively and improves the level of service achieved.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Parks and Countryside manage almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 62 community parks and 95 recreation grounds, and 155 hectares of local green space, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to 700 events annually. The service also manage a nursery which produces over 4 million bedding plants each year, 97 allotment sites, 812km of PROW, and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 22 cemeteries and 3 crematoria.
- 2.2 Environmental Action services are primarily delivered through 3 locality management teams accountable to Area Committees on a service level agreement basis. Activities include litter bin emptying, litter picking, street sweeping, and leaf clearing, along with enforcement activity that includes dog fouling, fly tipping, overgrown vegetation and litter. The teams are also responsible for proactive local environmental promotions. The management of the grounds maintenance contract was also carried out as part of Environmental Action Services up until the end of August.
- 2.3 A decision was taken in May to transfer the Parks and Countryside service from City Development to Environment and Neighbourhoods. The motivation behind this move was to enable closer working between services that impact on the local environment. This arrangement took effect from 1st September and combining services under one Directorate has enabled a greater focus on ways to improve co-ordination now that Parks and Countryside are part of an holistic approach to managing environmental services.

3 Main issues

3.1 Streetscene Grounds Maintenance

- 3.1.1 The management of the streetscene grounds maintenance contract has transferred to Parks and Countryside, effective from the 1st September. This is enabling integration of staff into an existing team which already has considerable knowledge and expertise of horticultural maintenance as well as the management and delivery of grounds maintenance contracts. Proposals are under way for a partial restructure of the service which will formalise this arrangement in a more effective way by enabling closer co-ordination of weed spraying activities with the grounds maintenance contract, a consistent approach to monitoring, along with an holistic approach to horticultural land management.
- 3.1.2 A review of the delivery approach for land currently either managed by Parks and Countryside or the contractor is being undertaken and considered for alternative

arrangements in 2013. This will provide even greater clarity for the public and service providers on what constitutes verges and incidental land around dwellings compared to land primarily for recreation or conservation.

- 3.1.3 The specification in the contract outlines requirements to deal with litter present on land maintained by ensuring that it is collected and removed prior to scheduled works. This is particularly important at the start of the grass cutting season, but is also a responsibility before each cut. It is also a requirement as part of other operations such as hedge cutting, shrub or rose pruning. Consideration is being given to expand this remit to cover adjacent hard surfaces where applicable in co-ordination with street cleansing activities.

3.2 Traffic Management

- 3.2.1 It should be noted that traffic management arrangements have been co-ordinated to minimise disruption and costs associated with closing part of the carriageway for horticultural and cleansing operations. Examples of this are at Stairfoot Lane and Holt Lane where Highways met the cost of road closure for highways operations, and Parks and Countryside staff took the opportunity to cut back overgrowing vegetation. Similarly, co-ordination between Locality Teams and the streetscene grounds maintenance contractor took place at Pudsey bypass where sweeping and gully cleansing operations followed grass cutting.

3.3 Litter and Waste Issues

- 3.3.1 Work is underway to co-ordinate litter collection in the vicinity of community parks where a site-based gardener is present. As part of their normal operations a site based gardener will undertake an initial litter pick of the park. This is being expanded to include some areas outside the curtilage of the park. Conversely, street cleansing staff now assist with emptying litter bins in parks on a weekend when parks staff are not always present. Examples of where this is taking place are as follows:

- **Cross Flatts Park:** Parks and Countryside to include the emptying of the bin on the entrance to Maud Avenue and include the highways bins on other entrances to the park. Locality Team to commence litter picking to the perimeter of the park and empty bins in the park close to the entrances at the weekend. In addition, a bollard blocking the entrance to a ginnel bordering the park has been removed enabling a path sweeper to clean, along with the removal of shrubs and trees on Maud Avenue to prevent litter accumulations.
- **Scatcherd Park:** Parks and Countryside to empty the bins on the roadside from Morley Leisure Centre down to the bottom of the hill during the week. Locality Team to empty the bins and litter pick the perimeter of the park at the weekend.
- **Manston Park:** Parks and Countryside to commence emptying litter bins outside the shops on Pendas Way and Church Lane during the week. Locality Team to empty bins between the entrance to Manston Park (Manston Gardens) and up to and including the playground.

- 3.3.2 With regard to green waste management, Parks and Countryside have now decommissioned the 'five acre' recycling facility at Red Hall. Green waste is now handled at a number of more locally based facilities as part of a corporate waste contract, thus enabling a more efficient approach with less travel involved in disposal.
- 3.3.3 Community and 'in bloom' groups (of which there are now around 60) can now use household waste sites for items of waste removed from relevant sites, for what might otherwise be treated as commercial waste. This provides a simple, yet effective way of supporting these groups who aim to improve the local environment by volunteering.
- 3.3.4 During the Christmas period in 2010, 32 staff from Parks and Countryside helped support refuse collection teams. This year, a request has been made for additional drivers and operatives out of normal hours, and it is anticipated that staff from Parks and Countryside will be able to assist.

3.4 Events

- 3.4.1 There are occasions when events either planned or weather related can mean that more work is required afterwards. More recently, co-ordinated working has resulted in a more comprehensive approach with staff from both services working together. Examples of this include the following:
- Leeds Asian Mela held at Roundhay Park whereby Parks and Countryside staff worked with the Locality Team to carry out a joint operation to ensure the areas inside and outside the park were cleansed following the event.
 - The Leeds West Indian Carnival where Parks and Countryside staff picked up litter outside the entrances of Potternewton Park following the event.
 - Woodhouse Moor has particular challenges over the summer, and both services have worked together to remove litter and empty litter bins on busy days.
 - The Wetherby Wilderness car park was flooded in September and Parks and Countryside staff worked to clear logs and wood following which the Locality Team sent in a street sweeper to restore the car park surface.

3.5 Weed and Moss Control

- 3.5.1 Parks and Countryside have responded quickly when weed spraying requests have been referred for ginnels where the locality team have already cut back vegetation, and removed detritus from the surface of the path. For example this approach has worked well on some of the problem ginnels in Alwoodley and Moortown. A recent initiative to respond to local priorities in Outer North West and Outer West, is for Parks and Countryside to apply a detergent to loosen moss from pavements combined with the locality team using path sweepers to clean the pavements once treatment is complete.

3.5.2 Work is now underway to identify and map all maintainable ginnels and work requirements to draw up an annual co-ordinated work schedule including vegetation cut backs, sweeping and litter removal, weed and moss treatment.

3.6 Dog Control

3.6.1 Locality Managers have led on consultation and worked with Parks and Countryside on developing proposals around dog control orders in Leeds. This has enabled dog exclusion orders in playgrounds, the bird garden at Lotherton, Tropical World/Canal Gardens, and Home Farm. Dogs are to be kept on a lead at all times in cemeteries, crematoria and closed church yards and ornamental gardens (at Horsforth Hall Park, Golden Acre, Temple Newsam and Roundhay). Funding for signage has been identified to inform the public.

3.6.2 Parks and Countryside have also worked with Ward Members, enforcement officers, PCSOs and the police to enable better intelligence gathering. Site based gardeners in parks have been briefed on the process for reporting and recording incidents. Where Parks and Countryside front line staff witness people allowing their dogs to foul, they now have direct contact with relevant enforcement officers who can be informed immediately.

3.6.3 In addition Parks and Countryside have committed where there is a permanent site presence to carry out the following:

- Periodically hand out leaflets to dog walkers that set out owners responsibilities.
- Approach offending dog owners and ask that they pick up any fouling by their dog. If they refuse, staff have been instructed to avoid confrontation but note a description for intelligence purposes.
- Report persistent offenders to Dog Wardens.
- Inform dog owners that normal litter bins can be used for bagged dog faeces.

3.6.4 An example of joint working on a specific site is Calverley Park. A joint education day was held over the summer where dog fouling enforcement staff joined together with Parks and Countryside ParksWatch staff, PCSO's to engage with the public. School children from Calverley Parkside Primary School were also involved as they use the park, and posters designed by the children were attached to lamp posts in and around the park. Leaflets were handed out along with bags to collect dog faeces.

3.6.5 Following this education awareness day, there were a number of enforcement patrols in and out of normal office hours within the park and surrounding neighbourhood by the WNW Locality Team and Dog Wardens. Information packs were also posted through residents letter boxes in the immediate vicinity of the park on actions they can take (i.e. report to the appropriate services) to assist enforcement to tackle this problem.

3.7 Shared Facilities

- 3.7.1 A further practical example of where co-ordinated working has taken place is in relation to sharing facilities. The Parks and Countryside service has a number of welfare facilities and yard space available in most community parks distributed throughout the city. This has provided an opportunity for the locality based teams to use these facilities for staff welfare provision and as operational bases.
- 3.7.2 For example, facilities have been shared at Dartmouth Park, Springhead Park, Barley Hill Recreation Ground and Hunslet Moor to enable street sweepers etc to operate more locally rather than using a central base. This allows the cleansing staff to operate more efficiently in terms of productive time and transport savings.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 This report is in response to a request from the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board for discussion at the board meeting in December.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The equality and diversity, cohesion and integration considerations have been addressed as part of the procurement arrangements where reference is made to specific contracts, and through the Council's adopted decision making protocols that impact on individual service areas.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 This report draws attention to co-ordinated working that demonstrates a contribution towards the following priorities contained in the City Priority Plan:
- Best city for communities:
 - effectively tackle and reduce anti-social behaviour in our communities.
 - Ensure that local neighbourhoods are clean.
 - Best city to live:
 - Enable growth of the city whilst protecting the distinctive green character of the city.
- 4.3.2 The report highlights the contribution to the following Council Business Plan priorities:
- Improve the quality of Leeds' parks
 - Create the environment for effective partnership working
 - Deliver the Safer and Stronger Communities City Priority Plan, with a focus on reducing burglary levels, increasing confidence in relation to Anti Social Behaviour and improving cleanliness
 - Improve refuse service reliability
 - Work effectively at a local level

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 This report seeks to highlight how co-ordination of environmental services has led to improvements in the effectiveness, consistency and efficiency of service activities and to minimise disruption to the public.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report or access to information restrictions.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no significant risks identified in this report.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That members note the content of the report.

6 Background documents¹

- 6.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.