

Performance of the Environmental Services Team – Area North

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Purpose of the Report

To update and inform the Area North Committee on the performance of the Environmental Services team in the Area for the period November 2017 to July 2018.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

The major focus of the service so far for this period, are listed below.

- Routine annual work schedule for cleansing and grounds maintenance
- South West in Bloom
- Service transformation
- Christmas tree shredding
- Development of the MOT facility in the vehicle workshops
- Annual budget outcomes

Operational Works

As always the main focus of the service has been to deliver the annual work schedules, as if these are delivered according to the plan, a successful service outcome is inevitable, resulting in low levels of complaints and good numbers of compliments, and once again we are pleased to inform members that this was delivered to plan.

We have now completed the 'spring rush' of work which has been the main focus of the teams. This has proven to be difficult this year due to weather conditions, where a wet start followed by high temperatures resulted in the teams having to delay some operations – such as mowing and weed spraying – instead focusing on completing key aspects of the service such as rural road litter picking and litter picking on our main roads and the verges of the A303, however we have a plan that we are delivering to meet these work demands.

Recently we have been investigating how to safely clean the central reservation areas of the A303 and have been looking into the cost implications of the traffic management system needed to fulfil this work. Our enquiries have resulted in two very different approaches being suggested by specialist companies, along with considerable variances in the associated costs. This caused some concern among the team and subsequently we have met with the Highways Agency regarding the cleansing of this section of the road. We are working with them to identify a work method that we can follow with confidence and could become 'standard practice' for other authorities carrying out similar duties. We expect to hear from the agency with their suggestions very soon.

During our recent litter picking operation of the A303 verges, we analysed the types of waste discarded and the volumes that we collect; we found that we gather approximately 10 black bin bags of waste per mile and the litter (measured by volume) consists of:

Plastic – 40%
Paper 30%
Cans 10%
Odd bits (pipes, Styrofoam, clothes, etc.) 15%
Car parts 5%

In addition to these cleaning operations, we have also worked to reduce the amount of litter deposited on A303 through the positioning of wheeled bins in the major lay-bys and this has proven to show a notable reduction in the amounts of litter deposited. The issue that we have faced regarding this initiative has been the damage caused to the bins by careless drivers who have driven over or reversed into them rendering them inoperable. To overcome this we are purchasing wheeled bin sized 'litter bins' that we will install in the layby's with wheeled bins inside them, making the area appear more attractive and providing protection for the wheeled bin. We aim to install two or three of these in each lay-by, by the end March 2020.

The work undertaken to clean the A303 was shared on social media and posts relating to the clean-up operation reached over 18,500 people and video content was viewed in excess of 7,500 times. BBC Somerset also ran their own piece on the clean-up which was broadcast on radio, alongside a video on their social media pages which was also viewed over 7,000 times. The video detailing the work of the A303 clean-up operation can be viewed online at <https://youtu.be/zQtLxNwkuCE>

We are also investigating the opportunities to provide the opportunity for people to have access to 'town centre recycling' and again over a period of four days waste collection, we analysed the waste that is being deposited in the litter bins in a town centre environment and found that the litter is made up of:

Cups	Glass	Tins	Plastic	Cardboard
6	2.25	5.75	7.25	5

(The figures represent volumes of waste measured in 'wheelie bins full'.)

We will repeat the analysis of this waste again during the summer months to identify if there are differing trends of materials throughout the year.

We are now investigating recycling companies who may have systems that will enable us to capture this recyclate without contamination from other waste sources. We have looked into the seemingly simple solution of litter bins with a recycling section attached to it. However this would not fit in alongside our cleansing systems and experience of other users shows that the recyclable materials collected tend to be contaminated by other waste streams, making for a visible recycling initiative that actually offers very low return at a comparatively high cost. As a result we are considering other recycling options.

We are also leading on a management approach to minimise the use of single use plastics across the district council and updates on progress in this area of the service will be made if requested.

As part of our processes to continually improve the service, we have reviewed what areas of work the team has focussed on over the last few years, and our findings are that we have:

- Increased our capacity to accommodate requests to empty additional litter and dog waste bins
- Improved the level of road sweeping on our major roads across the district by introducing a night shift sweeping round
- Managed to maintain service standards relating to highway weed control following changes to the County Highways' maintenance schedules.

We believe that we have been successful in improving these areas of service and the performance in these aspects of our work is sustainable. The next area of focus that we are looking to improve is the litter cleaning of all of the small rural roads across the district and we are hoping to coordinate our efforts with voluntary groups to clear litter from the public rights of way.

The works will be managed through a series of 'zones' and members will be updated on progress in their areas.

In the last report we informed members that the service had reduced its staff sickness levels from 14 days per employee to 9.4 days and we were aiming to reduce this further to a target of 8 days per person. I am delighted to update you on this as we have recorded figures of 6 days per employee, most of which have been due to long term sickness absences.

The team continues to work with the Key4life charity whose purpose is to help young offenders gain work experience that in turn reduces the likelihood that they will continue in the cycle of offend – prosecution – internment, as they have few other options available to them. The development of these young men through the scheme and work placements can truly be life changing. We are currently preparing to take five work experience placements in the near future.

The service continues to work with a number of Parishes across the district through the 'parish ranger scheme', offering a higher level of service and a solution to all of those little jobs which are so difficult to address. Should any parishes interested in this solution to local issues, we will be delighted to talk with them in more detail regarding this scheme and how we might be able to work together in the future. My thanks to all of those involved at the Parish Councils who make this scheme such a success.

In addition to these improvements, the analysis of compliments, complaints and enquiries across all of the service that made Streetscene showed that we received 1517 enquiries / requests for work, 70 complaints and 76 compliments, we are pleased with these figures as we believe that they show that the performance and behaviour of the teams is very good.

This year we once again offered our 'Christmas Tree Shredding Service' which proved to be a great success with trees being recycled from 47 towns and parishes across the district. In Area North we collected from:

- Ash
- Chilthorne Domer
- Curry Mallett & Beercrocombe
- Curry Rivel
- Ilton
- Kingsbury Episcopi
- Langport
- Long Sutton
- Martock
- Norton sub Hamdon
- Shepton Beauchamp
- Somerton

As a result of this, the tree chippings were re-used and a notable lack of 'dumped' Christmas trees in lay byes and hedges was seen. We received very little in the way of unwelcome items being left with the trees, nor did we experience much fly tipping in the areas designated for recycling, which was very welcome.

As always, we continue to focus on managing the number of flytips found in the district, the chart below shows the numbers of fly tips collected from Area North since the last report.

AREA NORTH:	Nov 17	Dec17	Jan 18	Feb 18	Mar 18	April 18	May 18	Total
Aller	1						1	2
Ash			1				3	4
Barrington								0
Beercrocombe								0
Bower Hinton							1	1
Chilthorne Domer					1	1	1	3
Compton Dundon		1	1			1		3
Curry Mallet		1	1		1	2		5
Curry Rivel	3	2		2	1	1		9
Drayton			1	1	1			3
Fivehead		2	1	3				6
Hambridge & Westport			2	2	2			6
High Ham			3	3	1			7
Huish Episcopi			1				1	2
Iilton	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	9
Isle Abbotts								0
Isle Brewers								0
Kingsbury Episcopi						1		1
Langport		1		1	1	1		4
Long Load								0
Long Sutton					1	1		2
Lopen			1	1		2		4
Martock	4	1	2	4	1	2	2	16
Montacute	3	1			1			5
Muchelney		1					1	2
Norton Sub Hamdon								0
Pitney								0
Puckington	1				1			2
Seavington					1	3		4
Shepton Beauchamp					1			1
Somerton	1		1	1	2	3	2	10
South Petherton	2	2	2	3	2	5	5	21
Stocklinch						1		1
Stoke Sub Hamdon		1	2	1				4
Tintinhull	3		1	2	2	1	2	11
TOTAL AREA NORTH	19	14	22	25	21	27	20	148

As always, we continue to focus on managing the number of flytips found in the district, the chart below shows the numbers of fly tips collected from Area North over the period since the last report. The figures indicate a healthy reduction in occurrences when compared to the same period last year when we cleared 160 flytips across the area.

Across the district as a whole we have found a similar pattern with 940 flytips reported this financial year compared to 1108 during the previous year.

We are continuing to monitor this situation and follow our approach of clearing away the items promptly so we do not allow the fly tips that have been made, to attract more items.

As part of the Councils transformation program, Streetscene has been rebranded as Environmental Services and now contains the Waste & Recycling Service and management of the Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery, should members wish for updates on these aspects of the service in the future, I will be best placed to provide this information.

In line with these changes, we are working with Somerset Waste Partnership in procuring a new collection contractor (and hence delivery of the 'Recycle More' initiative) since the Somerset Waste Board agreed to end its current kerbside waste and recycling collections contract in March 2020. Should members wish to know more detail on this matter, I would be happy to meet with them and offer an in-depth update on the work that is being done to achieve this goal.

The Yeovil Crematorium refurbishment is also progressing well with the principle design work agreed and the project management team embedded and meeting regularly to ensure that the developments are on target and on budget. The team working at the crematorium are dedicated to providing a high level of service and are very positive about this refurbishment and the projected outcome for the facility.

As part of this program of improvements, the cremators themselves will be replaced with modern, improved models which will be both more efficient and more environmentally friendly. We will however carry out some essential maintenance of one of the existing cremators to ensure its continued reliability through the replacement process to ensure that service to the public is uninterrupted. As part of the crematorium upgrade we will also be renewing the memorial garden and developing an overflow car parking area, so members can have confidence that the whole of the site facility will be brought to the highest standard.

I would like to add our thanks to Tom Pullin the Operations manager at the Crematorium who is retiring after 42 years of service and our thanks for all of his work and dedication go to him with heartfelt wishes that he has a happy and healthy retirement.

As noted in previous reports, the service has developed an MOT station at the depot and has now started as a functioning facility MOT'ing fleet vehicles. We are available to offer MOT's for commercial and private vehicles and aim to market this once we have operated on our own vehicles and addressed any teething problems. Great credit goes to all of those involved in developing this new business opportunity as they have done this alongside the day to day management of the council's commercial vehicle fleet, which carries the highest level of legal compliance as shown through the OCRS score.

The service is also reviewing its existing IT systems and work flows to enable better use of digitalisation and a reduction in our current paperwork processes whilst seeking to improve our existing IT systems to more modern programs which will enable us to work more effectively and efficiently.

The team has also carried out the recruitment of our agency staff provider and we are happy that we have secured a reliable, ethical and cost effective solution to our seasonal staffing needs.

Finally, I am pleased to inform members that the services all ended the last financial year with positive outcomes.

What's coming next?

- Summer delivery of the annual work programmes
- Establishment of the MOT station as a commercial enterprise
- Key4life work placements

Financial Implications

All of the matters highlighted in the report have been achieved within service budgets.

Implications for Council Priorities

- Continue to deliver schemes with local communities that enhance the appearance of their local areas
- Continue to support communities to minimise floodwater risks.
- Maintain street cleaning high performance across the district.

Background Papers

Progress report to Area Committees on the Performance of the Streetscene service.
