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| Briefing Paper  to  Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Place)  on  13th April 2021 |
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| **PARKS AND STREET CLEANSING UPDATE** | |

**1. SUMMARY**

1.1 This briefing paper gives Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Place) an update on the Council’s Parks and Street Cleansing services during Quarters 3 & 4 2020/21.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The service updates in this paper are for the key Parks and Street Cleansing activities which have taken since the last committee meeting on 5th October 2020. Appendix 1 seeks to address questions raised previously by Cllr Martin Wright earlier in the year.

**3. Overview**

3.1 Impact of Covid-19 of course continues to affect the district and both Parks and Street Cleansing Services continue to react and adapt to situations as they return to the ‘new normal’. With safe working procedures in place, staff continue with their duties subject to the pull on other critical services, vehicles and resources.

Overall, we have seen a rise in anti-social behaviour, vandalism and graffiti across the district. Response times to these and other requests for service have been slower at times than usual. Despite these challenges, staff have responded to higher levels of fly-tipping and waste across the districts, they have kept parks open and safe for visitors and the streets clean.

Sickness and absence levels due to Covid had been very low and both services have shown their resilience throughout the pandemic.

We now face a period of playing catch-up to ensure our greenspaces, playing pitches and neighbourhoods meet acceptable environmental standards.

**4. Parks**

4.1 Staffing & Service Update

Summer working hours (42 hours per week) for frontline staff commenced on 29th March 2021.

There are still a number of vacancies within the Parks Team and establishment lists are being reconciled. A recruitment proves will follow after Easter.

As we head into spring, hedge-cutting has come to an end. In-line with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, hedge-cutting and tree works are to be avoided during March to September due to bird nesting season and the protection of wildlife. There are of course exceptions such as for health and safety reasons, for example, vegetation obscuring sightlines.

4.2 Nottinghamshire County Council Highways Maintenance Contract

MDC undertake grass cutting and weed control on adopted highways on behalf of NCC. This contract is managed by Via East Midlands and currently generates an income to MDC of £163,566.

The first round of weed spraying began week commencing 22 March 2021. Residents can expect to see the weeds turning brown before dying back. Further spraying rounds of the district are due to take place in June and September 2021.

In line with the NCC grass cutting contract, all areas received at least the minimum of 5 cuts during 2020 with some areas such as the parks and main grass verges having had at least 8 cuts, depending in growth.

A similar schedule is planned for this year and it is anticipated that the easing of lockdown restrictions will enable staff to work through the district more efficiently than was the case last summer.

At the time of preparing this report, the future of the NCC contract in 2022 is unknown. Via are following this up with NCC and will feedback to the districts. For work planning purpose, districts need to know the outcome sooner rather than later.

4.2 Green Flag Awards

We are pleased to confirm that following desktop assessment of the management plans last year and a mystery shop, Mansfield’s award winning parks and green spaces continue to fly for another year at Carr Bank, Titchfield, Peafield, Yeoman Hill, King George V, The Carrs and Quarry Lane LNR.

Applications for 2021/22 have been submitted. Six of the sites will be Mystery Shopped at some point during the year and Yeoman Hill Park will be judged in person. Mystery Shops and full judging usually take place in alternate years; unfortunately we have no say over this timetable. Our reference would be to have a more even spilt between the Mystery Shops and judging years and this has been fed back to Keep Britain Tidy, who manage the campaign.

4.3 Outdoor Activities

As the government lockdown restrictions begin to ease, we are pleased to be able to welcome golfers back onto the Pitch & Putt course at King George V Park, tennis players back on Racecourse and Carr Bank and Petanque clubs to Titchfield and Carr Bank. The bowling season starts again in April.

We are also pleased to be able to support an extension to the junior football season, in line with the FA on Manor & Racecourse Park. Vital pitch repairs and reinstatement works will take place over the next few weeks to ensure playing pitches are fit for purpose and the Adult Teams can return later in the year.

A lease agreement is currently being drawn up with the Mansfield Racecourse Tennis club to set up a new tennis club on Racecourse Park. A report has been drafted for approval by the (MDC) Trustees. This is an exciting opportunity for the community to engage with and access top quality coaching and for MDC to breathe new life into our facilities with refurbishing of a new playing surface. Should the report be approved, we hope to be able to welcome the club on site over the summer.

Work with Harriers Athletics club on Berry Hill Park is striding ahead with the renovation of the running track and completion of work on the floodlights. Repairs have also being undertaken to the main pavilion roof. The old timber building is no longer fit for purpose and following an inspection by building control, demolition is recommended. A report is being drafted for approval

4.4 Tree Planting and Community Engagement

Earlier in the month saw the successful planting of 100 fruit trees to create a new orchard in Berry Hill Park.

The Parks team are pleased to be working with the Sherwood Forest Trust (SFT), as part of the Urban Green Recovery Challenge to help deliver tree planting projects.

Urban Greening projects also include work at Oak Tree Heath with the SFT Firestarter Project. This is aimed at educating locals about the dangers of starting fires in woodlands and green spaces.

4.5 ‘Bee Happy’

This is a new project to replace annual bedding displays to encourage bees, wildlife and colour into our town centres. Planters will be sown with wildflower seed and although not as long lasting as bedding, they are significantly cheaper to produce and of course, great for the urban environment. They will be placed in the town centre to create a Bee Friendly trail that will also incorporate other cultural activities.

Councillors will have the options to sponsor wildflower planters but numbers are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis. Further details will be circulated in due course.

**5. Street Cleansing**

5.1 Staffing & Service Update

March saw 2 of our much respected team members leave the authority to move onto pastures new. A recruitment process is underway to backfill these posts along with the 4 other vacancies the service has been carrying since the start of the pandemic.

Keep Britain Tidy have launched their Great British Spring Clean campaign <https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/get-involved/support-our-campaigns/great-british-spring-clean> which runs 28 May – 13 June 2021 which is being supported by Neighborhood Services.

Please keep an eye on social media for updates!

5.2 Street Cleaning Waste

The table below show the tonnage of waste that has passed through the Waste Transfer Station to date. (At the time of writing, March data has yet to be processed.)

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| **Tonnage of Street Cleansing Waste**  2020-2021 | | | | | |
|  | Qtr 1 | Qtr 2 | Qtr 3 | Qtr 4  (Jan-Feb) | **YTD** |
| Street Sweepings (litter, weeds, detritus) | 206.22 | 265.44 | 315.98 | 148.74 | **936.38** |
| Street Cleansing (litter bins & fly-tipping) | 168.21 | 174.44 | 192.52 | 125.00 | **660.17** |
| Property Services | 10.56 | 8.24 | 58.40 | 4.28 | **28.92** |
| **Grand Total** | **384.99** | **448.12** | **514.34** | **278.02** | **1,625.47** |

5.3 Fly-tipping

The table below show the quarterly breakdown of fly-tipping incidents attended to and the cost. In comparison to the previous year, there is an increase of 594 incidents at a cost of £41,784

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| **Fly Tipping** | | |
| Quarterly breakdown of incidents and costs | | |
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|  | **No. of incidents** | **Cost £** |
| **2020/21** | | |
| Qtr 1 | 405 | 23,393 |
| Qtr 2 | 567 | 32,652 |
| Qtr 3 | 493 | 26,816 |
| Qtr 4 | 536 | 28,899 |
| **Total** | **2,001** | **111,760** |
|  | | |
| **2019/20** | | |
| Qtr 1 | 301 | 13,817 |
| Qtr 2 | 398 | 18,782 |
| Qtr 3 | 326 | 16,783 |
| Qtr 4 | 382 | 20,594 |
| **Total** | **1,407** | **69,976** |

5.4 Oak Tree Estate

Fly-tipping, particularly around the bins stores in Oak Tree and on the Heath have increased over the past 6 months. Heads of Service and Senior Officers from Housing, Environmental Health, Community Safety and Street Cleansing have met with local Councillors to agree and take forward an action plan to tackle the situation on the estate.

Street Cleansing and Parks Officers continue to support the Oak Tree Nature Conservation Group with collection and removal of fly-tipping and waste.

**6.       COMMENTS OF HEAD OF SERVICE**

6.1     The teams have been working hard to continue delivery of their own services, as well as continuing to support Waste and Recycling collections when required. There are some exciting projects moving forward with the tree planting, Big Spring Clean and the bee friendly trail, which we hope will be popular with residents.

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