

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda
Item No.

meeting date: 6 NOVEMBER 2012
title: LEAF CLEARANCE – IMPLICATIONS FOR STREET CLEANSING
submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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PETER McGEORGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To advise members on recent guidance for the treatment of leaves recovered through the street cleansing operation, and the effect these changes will have on this Council.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
- Corporate Priorities – To provide a high quality environment, keeping land clear of litter and refuse, and reducing incidents of dog fouling.
- Other Considerations – To maximise recycling and reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Since Autumn 2003, leaves recovered through the street cleansing operation have been mixed with the green waste collected from households, and composted.

2.2 Prior to the delivery to the current treatment arrangements within the County Waste Technology Park, this material was composted through an `on farm, open windrow` site located within the Ribble Valley.

2.3 All waste facilities are governed by the Environment Agency and operated under strict licence conditions.

2.4 In general terms, responsibility for leaf collection rests with the Borough Council. During autumn and winter months, between 700-900 tonnes are collected and composted.

2.5 The bulk of leaf collection is done through the use of mechanical sweepers that are hired in as part of an overall street sweeper contract. The level of service is increased during autumn/winter, to reflect the increase in demand from leaf fall.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Although the Borough Council has a general duty for the collection of fallen leaves as part of general litter/detritus, historically, Lancashire County Council has made a contribution towards the removal of leaves from the highway, where there is an increased skid risk. This tends to focus on roads with steep inclines, and is exacerbated in wet weather.

As members can imagine, it is very difficult to separate out the LCC element from our own, as sweepers and staff are deployed over general areas, rather than those specifically defined as an LCC priority.

Following limited trials instigated by the Environment Agency, they have recently updated their guidance on the recovery of untreated street sweepings, with the result that “Due to the potential for contamination our current guidance is that dedicated street cleansing collections of untreated leaf litter should not be used as feedstock for composting or used as feedstock to produce quality compost”. They do, however, approve treatment through mechanical and/or biological treatment that would allow this waste stream to be included within the general/residual waste stream.

- 3.2 Recycling credits have previously been paid for leaves sent for composting; however, in future, this income will not be available now that the leaves are to be included within the general waste stream.
- 3.3 Officers have encouraged the County Council to take part in the continuing trials for the composting of leaf litter, as we consider that continuing to compost leaves would benefit both authorities, financially and performance wise. Unfortunately, they have declined, due to the practicalities of composting leaf litter at the Waste Technology Parks along with districts’ green waste, and that, should the outcome not be positive, all the material would be landfilled, with subsequent costs and loss of diversion performance.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The outcome of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – Recycling credit income will be reduced by between £35,000 - £45,000 per annum.
 - The annual cost of the sweeper hire contract is £94,770.

This is broken down as follows –

Standard Sweeper Hire (all year round)	£39,940
Enhanced seasonal provision	£42,240
Mini Sweeper	£10,560
Contingencies	£2,030

- The enhanced provision allows for the hire of two sweepers for between 14–22 weeks, and is used predominantly for leaf clearance. An element of the standard provision is also used for leaf clearance during this period. If we were to operate at the minimum level of 14 weeks, then it would generate a saving of around £11,500.
- LCC currently makes a contribution of £18,500 pa towards winter leaf clearance, although the current arrangement comes to an end in March, and is currently being re-negotiated as part of our overall Public Realm Agreement with them.

- **Technical, Environmental and Legal** – The loss of leaves for composting will reduce the Council's overall recycling rate performance by between 3.3% - 4.3%, and have a negative impact by increasing the amount of general/residual waste we report by between 28kg–36kg per household per annum.

In order to offset the loss of income from recycling credits, we may have to reduce the levels of seasonal leaf clearance, or ask LCC to increase their contribution towards it. It is unlikely that LCC will increase its contribution, so careful consideration will need to be given to future specifications.

- **Political** – The level of disagreement with LCC is difficult to predict at this moment, but we should not rule out the likelihood.
- **Reputation** – The street cleansing service has historically delivered services to a high standard, so any reduction may result in increased complaints.
- **Equality & Diversity** – No implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

Officers will continue to negotiate with LCC to reduce the gap in income, whilst, at the same time, maintaining service levels, where possible.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Environment Agency Guidance: Update-Recovery of Street Sweepings and Gully Emptyings.
Environment Agency Guidance: Recovery of Street Sweepings and Gully Emptyings

For further information please ask for Peter McGeorge, extension **4467**

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