

REPORT TO: Dundee Contract Services Committee - 12th June 2006
REPORT ON: Garden Maintenance Service Survey
REPORT BY: Director of Dundee Contract Services
REPORT NO.: 363-2006

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the results of a survey of users of the Garden Maintenance Service delivered by Dundee Contract Services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The report recommends that the Committee recognises the high level of satisfaction reported by users of the service.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The survey was designed and delivered in-house and the costs of the operation of the survey were met from revenue budgets.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The survey provides positive feedback on a service provided to people who are particularly likely to be poor, such as older people or people with disabilities.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATION

5.1 None.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 Garden maintenance is a service offered free to those citizens who qualify or for a small charge to those citizens considered able to pay.

6.2 The service is available to tenants who are over 70 years of age or who have disabilities which prevent them taking care of their own gardens. It is provided free of charge to those on Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Income Support (Pension Credit).

6.3 The service includes regular grass cutting throughout the growing season and the tidying of shrub beds (but not flower beds) and hedge pruning.

6.4 Since 2000, the service has been administered by Dundee Contract Services, Garden Maintenance Officer. In that time around 500 claimants have been

removed from the service because they did not qualify and the number of users paying for the service has increased from 12 to 210, generating an extra £21,000 of income.

6.5 There are currently 2,180 users of this service.

7. THE SURVEY FORMAT

7.1 The survey took the form of a letter sent to all users of the service with a reply-paid envelope. The letter posed a number of questions relating to the quality of the service this year and on options for developing the service. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1.

7.2 There were 2,180 surveys sent out and of these 1,336 were completed and returned, representing a return rate of 61.3%.

8. QUALITY OF SERVICE

8.1 98.7% of those responding said that the gardeners who carried out the garden maintenance were helpful and polite.

8.2 95.8% of those responding agreed that the gardeners take appropriate care while carrying out the work.

8.3 92.8% of those responding agreed that the gardener took time to tidy up after completing the work.

8.4 93.2% of those responding were happy with the standard of grass cutting.

8.5 90.3% of those responding were happy with the standard of hedge pruning. This reflects the fact that Health and Safety Regulations require that hedges can be maintained safely from a standing position, whereas some users of the service would prefer a higher hedge for the sake of privacy and security.

8.6 87.2% of those responding were happy with the standard of bed maintenance. This reflects a level of dissatisfaction at the fact that the service specification does not include the maintenance of flower beds other than for roses/shrubs.

8.7 These returns were further broken down for each of the 10 garden maintenance areas. This highlighted a significantly poorer performance in one area. Corrective action has since resolved this problem.

9. DEVELOPING THE SERVICE

9.1 The opportunity was taken to determine the level of demands for developing some aspects of the service.

9.2 43.2% of users said they would like more work to be covered by the maintenance scheme i.e. tree cutting or shrub pruning.

9.3 39.2% of users said they would like a complete maintenance i.e. grass cut and beds maintained, at every visit.

9.4 21.6% of users said they would be willing to pay extra for this service. It should be noted that currently 210 users pay for the service, or 9.6%, bringing in an income of £21,000 against a total expenditure of £0.5m.

10 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Depute Chief Executive (Finance) have been consulted on the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None.

R.P. JACKSON
DIRECTOR OF DUNDEE CONTRACT SERVICES

Date: 2 June 2006

APPENDIX 1

If Calling please ask for
Eddie Niven, 434770

Our Ref BP/EN/LC
Your Ref
Date:

Dear Sir/Madam

Garden Maintenance Service Annual Survey

Dundee Contract Services seeks to continuously improve the services it offers to citizens in Dundee. We are interested in your views about the quality of the services and about how it can be developed in the future. To help us, please take a few moments to answer these questions and return the form to us in the reply paid envelope (you will not need a stamp). If you prefer, please feel free to contact me or my colleague directly with your comments.

Bruce Patrick
Quality Manager

QUALITY OF THE SERVICE THIS YEAR	YES	NO
Were the gardeners who carried out the garden maintenance helpful and polite?		
Did the gardeners take appropriate care while carrying out the work?		
Did the gardeners take time to tidy up after completing the work?		
Are you happy with the standard of grass cutting carried out this year?		
Are you happy with the standard of hedge pruning carried out this year?		
Are you happy with the standard of bed maintenance carried out this year?		

DEVELOPING THE SERVICE	YES	NO
Do you think more work should be covered by the garden maintenance scheme, i.e. tree cutting, shrub pruning?		
Do you think that a complete maintenance should be carried out at every visit, i.e. grass cut and beds maintained?		
Would you be prepared to pay for these extra services?		

Please add any other comments overleaf.

Eddie Niven Garden Maintenance Officer
Telephone: 01382 434770
e-mail: eddie.niven@dundeecity.gov.uk

Bruce Patrick Quality Manager
Telephone: 01382 434757
e-mail: bruce.patrick@dundeecity.gov.uk

GM Annual Survey