



WHITBURN & BLACKBURN LOCAL AREA COMMITTEE

SERVICE UPDATE – NETS, LAND & COUNTRYSIDE

REPORT BY HEAD OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise members of the recent activity of the NETs Land & Countryside Services' teams for the period 1 August 2018 – 31 October 2018.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Local Area Committee is asked to:

1. Note the work carried out by the service within the local area.
2. Advise of any areas that require further information or investigation.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; making best use of our resources; working in partnership
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	None
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We make the most efficient and effective use of resources by minimising our impact on the built and natural environment
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	In line with available revenue and capital budgets
VII	Consideration at PDSP	None
VIII	Other consultations	None

D1 TERMS OF REPORT

Report on activity for period 1 August 2018 – 31 October 2018.

D2 Grounds Maintenance Routine Works

There have been five grass cutting visits within the reporting period completing the grass cutting for the season. Herbicide application on shrub beds and channels/hard areas have also been completed for the year. Work has started on winter works of hedge pruning and are about to start shrub bed maintenance. Staff are also reacting to enquiries that come in.

The latest Land Audit Management score for the West area was 67, which is the target score.

Grounds Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 24 grounds maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2018.

	2018	2017
Adopt Open Spaces in Priv Est	0	1
Complaint Grounds Maintenance	0	3
Drainage Flooding Grass Areas	1	4
Enforcement Officer Enquiries	2	2
Fencing Enquiries	2	0
Grass Area Damaged	0	1
Grass Cutting Enquiries	2	11
Grass Cutting Missed Not Cut	0	1
Grass Left on Paths or Roads	1	0
Grounds Property Vandalised	0	2
Hedge Cutting Enquiries	3	6
Public Park Enquiries	3	12
School Grounds Enquiries	0	1
Shrub Bed Enquiries	0	2
Shrub Bed Overhanging Path	5	10
Shrub Bed Obscuring Sightline	0	1
Shrub Bed Not Maintained	1	2
Sports Facilities Enquiries	0	3
Weeds General Enquiries	2	1
Weeds on Paths or Roads	2	2
Total	24	65

D3 Garden Maintenance Routine Works

There have been five grass cutting cycles completed as well as completing the hedge cutting in the gardens in the ward during the reporting period. This work is carried out by a team of four operatives, who also cover 50% of the gardens included on the scheme across the whole of West Lothian. The Garden Maintenance works for the year have now finished and the seasonal contracts for the garden maintenance staff were ended on 3 November 2018.

Garden Maintenance Enquiries

In total there were 24 garden maintenance related enquiries received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2018.

	2018	2017
Complaint Garden Maintenance	1	4
Garden Maintenance Change of Address	1	0
Garden Maintenance General Enquiries	5	18
Garden Maintenance Grass Not Cut	9	5
Garden Maintenance Hedge Cutting	3	4
Garden Maintenance No Longer Required	2	2
Garden Maintenance Standard of Cut	3	5
Total	24	38

D4 Cleaner Communities Routine Works

The ward is covered by a mobile cleansing team consisting of five operatives and one compact sweeper. Whitburn has the additional resource of a street orderly and there is a backshift team covering the area from Whitburn Academy to the main street daily in the afternoon. There is a reduced level of staff on at the weekend covering West Lothian, and Whitburn Main Street is one of the areas covered by them. We also have two HGV sweepers that cover the whole of West Lothian.

Staff are continuing to deal with enquiries and carry out routine works to remove litter, fly tipping and debris on roads, footpaths and open spaces throughout the ward.

Cleaner Communities Enquiries

In total 89 cleaner communities related enquiries were received and dealt with during this reporting period in 2018.

	2018	2017
Complaint Street Cleansing	0	1
Dead Animals	11	4
Dog Fouled Grass/Open Space	0	6
Dog Fouling on Paths/Roads	13	24
Dog Waste Bin New Request	0	3
Glass on Paths or Open Spaces	2	3
Graffiti Non Offensive	1	0
Graffiti Racist or Offensive	1	1
Illegal Fly Posting	1	0
Illegal Fly Tipping/Dumping	21	46
Litter Bin Full Overflowing	2	0
Litter Bin New Request for Bin	0	1
Litter General Enquiries	5	1
Litter in Grass/Open Space	1	1
Litter On Paths/Road Verges	5	3
Needles/Syringes Abandoned	3	3
Street Sweeping Enquiries	6	7
Vehicle Abandoned	17	23
Total	89	127

Enforcement Community Action

The team consists of two Senior Enforcement Officers, two Education Engagement Officers and eight Enforcement Officers. They are split into two teams of six officers to cover seven days a week on shifts with one team on shift at a time.

There has been one fixed penalty notice issued for a litter offence and two fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling offences.

Enforcement Officers have attended to all enquiries in relation to various environmental issues within area and carried out patrols. Visits to residents giving verbal warnings and warning letters issued in relation to dog fouling and fly tipping in order to change behaviours following complaints. Compliance gained with affected areas being cleaned up.

Abandoned/nuisance vehicles have been dealt with throughout the ward gaining compliance following negotiation, verbal warnings, warning letters, official notices served or WLC contractor removal.

Enforcement Officers have carried out audits on school transport buses and taxis on behalf of Transport Department, and assisted colleagues in Community Learning & Development Youth Services through the More Choices More Chances programme. Also assisted colleagues from Licencing Department carrying out inspection audits and delivering urgent correspondence.

Education and Engagement officers have liaised with several residents, community groups, and schools, and followed up any concerns raised. Organisation and arrangements made for community clean ups by a number of schools, community groups and companies.

- Litter Stencilling carried out the length of Shanks Road, along with shops at East Main Street and Mini Market area
- Information stand provided at Wild Wednesdays Polkemmet Park
- Dog Fouling Stencilling carried out Heartlands
- October West Lothian Tenants Association presentation

Officers have participated in 'Give Your Litter a Lift' a national campaign being conducted by Keep Scotland Beautiful. They also took part during September with the Chewing Gum Action Group in a campaign where five temporary signs were erected at the roadside throughout West Lothian in relation to disposing of your gum in the bin.

Officers have also engaged in partnership working with various agencies such as Police Scotland, Housing Associations, Woodlands Trust Scotland, Forestry Commission, WLC Countryside Rangers, WLC Housing and WLC Waste Services on a range of issues.

D5 Parks and Woodland Enquiries

In total 51 Parks and Woodland related enquiries were received during this reporting period. 34 enquiries were inspected, 16 enquiries required no action, 18 enquiries generated works instructions to programme and 17 works instructions were completed.

	2018	2017
Tree works completed for period	17	n/a
Tree works outstanding for LAC area	47	n/a
Tree related Enquiries for report period	34	n/a
Tree Enquiries not generating works orders	16	n/a
Tree Advice or Consultations	1	0
Tree Affecting Public Utility	1	1
Tree Blocking Light	2	1
Tree Branches Overhanging	10	6
Tree Broken/Damaged or Dead	1	4
Tree Dangerous or Unsafe	16	3
Tree Enquiries General	17	9
Tree Leaves Causing Problems	3	6
Total	51	30

Blaeberryhill Park, Whitburn - Outline plans are being prepared for the woods at Blaeberryhill and also those behind Croftmalloch Primary School. Ideas will be presented at Whitburn Community Council's November meeting for initial feedback on the plans and also how best to consult / communicate with the wider community who use the park or live adjacent to it.

Tree Preservation Orders (TPO)

Trees and woodlands contribute to local amenity and the quality of the natural and historic environment. Tree Preservation Orders protect the most important trees in West Lothian from felling, or from works which might damage them.

Trees can form significant local landmarks and provide food and shelter for wildlife. They add to biodiversity and have an important role in mitigating the effects of climate change. They can be protected in a number of ways.

The council can make, manage and enforce Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) under powers set out in section 160 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 and in the Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation Order and Trees in Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Regulations 2010 (the 2010 Regulations). Scottish Government Circular 1/2011 Tree Preservation Orders also applies.

In addition to TPOs, trees can be protected by conditions attached to planning approvals.

Trees within conservation areas are not protected in the same way as by a TPO, but if you live in a conservation area and want to carry out works to a tree you will need to inform the council before you do. The council then has six weeks to decide whether to seek any form of protection for the tree.

To clarify the situation, any enquiries regarding trees that are within Conservation Areas or covered by a Tree Preservation Order shall be passed to our colleagues in Planning Services for them to provide any advice.

It is an offence to cut down, lop, top, uproot or wilfully destroy any trees that are protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The maximum penalty for illegal works on a protected tree is £20,000 or twice the amenity value of the tree, whichever is greater.

Any applications to carry out works should be submitted to the Planning Department in the first instance and permission must be received in writing before any work can be undertaken.

For more information please refer to the West Lothian Council web site under Tree Preservation Orders ; - <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/4247/Tree-Preservation-Orders-TPO>

Ranger Service Update

No. School groups attending Outdoor Education / Forest School Sessions	3
No. Pupils attending Outdoor Education / Forest School Sessions	91
No. Rights Of Way / Core Path / Patrols carried out (hours)	12
No. Conservation Surveys / Tasks	10
No. Volunteer hours	102
No. Ranger Events	5
No. attendees at Ranger Events	101

The Ranger Service attended the Whitburn Summer Club offering a free Pioneering session on the 6th August.

Strength & Soul ran a free Yoga in the Park session at Polkemmet on the 11th August which they are hoping to continue with their next date planned for the 15th September (weather permitting).

Artist, Katrina Stewart ran a free craft session inspired by nature in the last week of the summer holidays at Polkemmet on the 16th August. A free drop-in willow weaving event took place at Polkemmet on the 15th September.

Rangers held a successful Halloween Broom stick making event at the peat moss (Easter Inch Moss), Blackburn. 17 children used birch from the moss to make brooms. Birch removal is an important part of the management of the moss.

The Friends of Polkemmet co-hosted a number of work party sessions to carry out small conservation/maintenance tasks within the Park. 62 participants took part over the sessions contributing 102 'man hours'. They will be running two sessions a month through the rest of the year in partnership with the Ranger Service.

Work has been completed on improvements and resurfacing of both the Mausoleum and River paths. Contractors have also finished dredging the wildlife pond at Polkemmet and will finish upgrading the path, boardwalk and installing a new pond dipping platform within the next few weeks.

A number of tree limbs came down at Polkemmet as a result of the windy weather in September – all were swiftly reported by the Ranger team and dealt with by the arb squad.

D6 Open Space and Cemeteries

Open Space Routine Works

Redhouse Place Green, Blackburn. Consultation is complete for the new play area. Works will be completed in 2018. Works include installation of number of pieces of toddler play equipment and associated ground graphics (on the hardstanding area immediately north of the recycling bins). This area will be landscaped and a safe surface installed throughout. Wider park works will include the creation of a small tarmac pitch area, and installation of new seating. We will also clear some trees to the north west of the site which are attracting anti-social behaviour. These additional works will be completed in 2018/19.

Seafield Green Local Park. Additional play equipment has now been installed, and park furniture (picnic tables and handrail) has been refurbished. A seat adjacent to this woodland has been replaced. The small woodland area to the east of the school will be thinned and desire lines through this area will be cleared of vegetation, anticipated for 2018 completion.

Greenrigg Primary School, Shelter Belt. Work within the shelter belt has been completed by CSGNT (Central Scotland Green Network Trust). Works include planting fruit trees, path works, tree work, and creation of a natural outdoor seating area (wood logs). Two new bench seats have also been installed adjacent to the play area.

Greenrigg Community Woodland. Works are being planned to repair fences and gates at two entrances to the woodland. These have been vandalised by those using the site on motorised vehicles. Once repaired, additional barriers to access will be installed at the entrances. Work anticipated for 2018/19 completion.

Croftmalloch Play Area, Reveston Lane, Whitburn. A drain has been added to reduce the water crossing the path and a second drain is being installed for improving the drainage around the playground features. Works to be completed in November 2018.

Open Space Enquiries

There were no Open Space enquiries for this reporting period in 2018.

	2018	2017
Children Play Enquiries	0	2
Glass or Litter in Play Areas	0	1
Total	0	3

Cemeteries Routine Works

Whitburn Cemeteries

Autumn routine works which include – Grass cutting, hedge pruning, weed control and burial duties ongoing across the cemetery estates.

Cemeteries Enquiries

There were five Cemeteries enquiries for this reporting period in 2018.

	2018	2017
Cemeteries General Enquiries	4	4
Cemetery Property Vandalised	0	1
Complaint Cemeteries and Burials	0	5
Lair Enquiries	1	6
Total	5	16

E. CONCLUSION

Work has started on winter works of hedge pruning and are about to start shrub bed maintenance.

Enforcement Officers have attended to all enquiries in relation to various environmental issues within area and carried out patrols.

Consultation is complete for the new play area in Redhouse Place, Blackburn. Works will be completed in 2018.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Open Space Strategy

Capital Programme

Appendices/Attachments: None

Contact Persons: Eirwen Hopwood, Parks and Woodland Manager, 01506 284500

Eirwen.Hopwood@westlothian.gov.uk

Jim Jack
Head of Operational Services
3 December 2018