

Cabinet Lead Report - June 2023

Environmental Services – Cllr Lulu Bowerman

Summary

There have been significant changes in delivery of services by Norse since the last report, leading to a clearer focus on how to improve current standards and future service delivery. The partnership arrangements with East Hampshire District Council have dissolved by mutual agreement, leading to Norse South East Ltd being solely focused on Havant's needs. In parallel with this, a new Operations Director has been appointed after a long and challenging search for a suitable candidate to lead Norse.

Likewise, Sonja Reames has been appointed as the Council's Senior Contract Manager, strengthening internal capacity to manage services and plan for future challenges. Both of these appointments are driving a stronger focus on improving the quality of service delivery and there have already been significant improvements such as implementation of the third garden waste round and reliable glass bank servicing.

Key achievements in the last few months include:

Supporting elections logistics. Norse worked closely with the Democratic Services team to plan and implement the practical side of delivering all the equipment needed at polling stations. This went very smoothly, receiving praise from the Democratic Services Manager.

Implementation of the third garden waste round. The garden waste service reached maximum capacity many years ago, preventing additional residents from signing up. The new round will enable 6,500 more customer and commenced on 1st June. There are already over 3,000 new customers and first few weeks of collections have operated effectively. Further marketing will be ongoing to encourage residents to use this service.

Grass cutting in Spring growth period. Weather conditions were particularly bad in March and April with twice the average annual rainfall in March leading to waterlogged ground which did not dry out enough until early May. This prevented the teams from carrying out the first cut in April in many places, leading to excessive growth which has then further slowed down progress. Additional resources have been deployed, prioritising safety at junctions, high profile location and then parks and playgrounds. To address the immediate challenges, Norse are focusing on one geographical area at a time, concentrating resources and effort, to drive up productivity.

Preparation for summer season on Hayling Island. Spring always creates challenges for preparing the Island for summer visitors. The excessive rain in March and April has also impacted many other activities such as gravel car park maintenance. In spite of this, the team successfully relocated beach huts from their eroding locations at West Beach and also supported the Coastal partnerships Team in clearing up after Spring storms. A surge in resources was implemented in early June, helping to resolve the backlog of tasks, which in turn has enabled teams to move their focus to other areas of the Borough in late June and throughout July.

Allotments. Work is ongoing with improving the allotments offer in the 12 sites in the Borough. Part of this work is to broaden the appeal and offer to all ages in having an allotment with variants such as different size plots. Recently an allotment was handed over to the Bidbury Infant School who will use it to teach the children about growing different types of food as part of their after-school gardening club. Food growing can teach children about soil, nutrition, science and life cycles of vegetables and creatures in the garden. We are keen to work with other schools in the area with similar projects in the future.

Great British Spring Clean. Norse assisted with the great British Spring Clean, providing litter pickers, bags and gloves to volunteers across the Borough. This initiative is run by Keep Britain Tidy and is a practical way that we can support local residents who are committed to improving their local environment.