

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL****LENGTHSMAN SCHEME****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is to provide the Policy Committee with an overview of progress to implement a nine month pilot of the Lengthsman scheme.

**Information and Advice**

2. The County Council's refreshed Strategic Plan 2010-14 commits the authority to embracing Localism.
3. Council approved a Localism Policy to progress this commitment on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012. The Policy requires that the merits of a Lengthsman scheme are evaluated which is to be based in part upon a pilot of the scheme.
4. On 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012 the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways agreed a range of provisions to establish a pilot scheme to run from July 2012 until 31 March 2013.

**Implementation of the Lengthsman Pilot**

5. A Lengthsman is a person employed or contracted by a number of town and/or parish councils to carry out minor highways and environmental works locally. These works may not always be an immediate priority or cost effective for Nottinghamshire County Council to carry out on a small scale. The work of a Lengthsman will be managed locally by the town and/or parish councils to enable them to respond quickly and cost effectively to meet local needs.
6. The primary purpose of the pilot scheme is to test and evaluate the Lengthsman concept across clusters of Nottinghamshire town and parish councils. The pilot will inform any decision on whether to roll the scheme out in April 2013.
7. On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 the County Council extended an invitation to all 161 town and parish councils to express an interest to participate in the fully funded pilot. Around 40% of all Nottinghamshire town and parish councils responded.
8. Constructive dialogue took place between May and June 2012 with those town and parish councils interested in pursuing the scheme, either in its pilot form or

potentially in April 2013. This sought to identify and resolve any local issues which might hinder successful delivery of the pilot scheme.

9. In total 30 town and parish councils submitted a proposal to participate in the scheme. Of these 2 town councils and 15 parish councils have successfully commenced the pilot scheme. These take the form of 4 clusters which are detailed at Appendix 1.
10. Feedback from a broad range of town and parish councils engaged by the County Council indicated that they were interested in the scheme and the outcomes of the pilot. A number of these councils have already contacted the County Council for discussions regarding the April 2013 scheme.
11. A flexible approach has been taken to implementing the pilot, providing town and parish councils with a broad framework description of how it should operate, whilst encouraging participants to adapt the scheme to meet with individual local circumstances. As a result, each cluster is operating a distinct setup developed locally.
12. Training and safety equipment has been provided by the County Council as part of the scheme. On-going support and guidance is being made available throughout the duration of the pilot.
13. All town and parish councils have been informed of the commencement of the pilot scheme. It is proposed that this engagement continues with the County Council maintaining communication with all town and parish councils during the course of the pilot.
14. The pilot scheme has attracted sufficient interest to ensure an effective and robust evaluation. It is expected that that expenditure for the pilot is likely to materialise within the set budget at around £26,000.

## **Initial feedback and Media Interest**

15. The scheme, which has been running from July 2012, has received positive reviews in its first two months; from both participating town and parish councils and the Lengthsman themselves.
16. The pilot scheme has also received a significant level of local, national and international media interest. This has included the Deputy Leader featuring in a short film segment for a Russian television news station. The story also made the front page of the Daily Telegraph and the Irish Times newspapers.
17. A follow up story about a 'father and son Nottinghamshire Lengthsman' has also been featured in The Nottingham Evening Post, BCC Nottingham, The Retford Times and The Worksop Guardian.

## **Evaluation**

18. It is proposed that an initial evaluation of the pilot will take place in early November. Evaluation will support elected Members in determining both the merits and a suitable model for any potential roll out. This will report on the following features:

- Increased frequency and improved standard of service delivery to participating town and parish councils
- Improved customer perception of the County Council and satisfaction levels amongst residents
- Parishes able to prioritise local activity to meet local need
- Promoting positive relations in the local community
- Reduction in the number of Highways complaints (with the exception of those reported by the Lengthsman as part of his role)
- Reduction in the amount of Nottinghamshire County Council time spend addressing complaints: both through the Customer Services Centre and Highways staff time
- Recurring minor issues dealt with more efficiently
- Reduction in the number of Highways call outs to deal with minor issues enabling Highways Managers to focus on more strategic maintenance issues
- Potential savings achieved through the pilot, as compared to other methods of delivering an enhanced service

19. To support the evaluation, it is proposed that an event is held in November 2012 for all town and parish councils. This will provide an opportunity to demonstrate the progress of the pilot as well gauge interest on the potential roll out of the scheme in April 2013.

20. A further report will be brought to elected Members in December outlining the results of this initial evaluation as well as proposals for a future scheme. Further work will need to be undertaken to refine the detail of the proposed scheme prior to its prospective commencement from April 2013.

## **Other Options Considered**

21. None.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

22. The Council's refreshed Strategic Plan for 2010-14 has a specific action to embrace Localism. The County Council's Localism Policy provides a coherent approach for the Council to meet the principles, commitments and actions set out in the Strategic Plan.

23. As a key action arising from implementation of the Council's Localism Policy, reporting of progress on delivering these requirements falls within the responsibility of the Policy Committee.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

24. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that

1. the Committee note progress in developing the Lengthsman scheme pilot

**Councillor Martin Suthers**  
**Deputy Leader of the Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Paula McManus, Policy Officer T: (0115) 977 3753 E: paula.mcmanus@nottsc.gov.uk

### **Constitutional Comments (SLB 22/08/2012)**

This report is for noting only.

### **Financial Comments (IC 24/08/2012)**

The financial implications are as contained in paragraph 14 of this report and will be funded from the 2012-13 Highways Revenue budget.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Nottinghamshire County Council Localism Policy  
Decision ER/2012/00078

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All

## **Appendix 1**

**Overview of town and parish councils participating in the Lengthsman scheme pilot**

**Cluster 1**

Harworth and Bircotes Town Council

Scrooby Parish Council

Ranskill Parish Council

Blyth Parish Council

Hodsock Parish Council

Babworth Parish Council

**Cluster 2**

North Wheatley Parish Council

North Leverton and Habbleshthorpe Parish Council

South Leverton Parish Council

South Wheatley Parish Council

Sturton Le Steeple Parish Council

**Cluster 3**

Ollerton and Boughton Town Council

Rufford Parish Council

**Cluster 4**

Dunham-on-Trent Parish Council

Darlton Parish Council

Fledborough Parish Council

Ragnall Parish Council