



13 February 2013

Agenda Item:11

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR, HIGHWAYS
2014 HIGHWAYS GRASS CUTTING DELIVERY**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the arrangements for delivery of the highway grass cutting service in 2014.

Background

2. The County Council's Transport and Highways Committee on 4th July 2013 considered a report updating delivery of the highway grass cutting service in the current year. This noted that:
 - a. Within each District there are substantial areas of amenity grass which are cut by District Councils up to fourteen times per year. Where this amenity grass is adjacent to highway verge it can lead to expectation from local residents that the highway verge should be cut to the same frequency. However, this is often a reflection of the different uses of the grassed areas and perhaps unreasonable to incur the extra cost of cutting highway verges to the higher standard. However, arrangements continue to be developed to improve co-ordination of the highway grass cutting with amenity grass cutting and other District Council functions such as litter picking.
 - b. It is also noted that there are also 30 Parish Councils that arrange grass cutting in their areas.
 - c. In some periods last summer and in some urban areas the grass cutting slipped behind schedule by several weeks due in part to the weather but in the main due to the new arrangements in place for Ashfield, Broxtowe and Mansfield. Additional resources were then deployed to improve that situation.
 - d. A schedule showing when the highway grass is going to be cut in areas across each District was also introduced on the County Council's website so that residents can see when the grass in their area is going to be cut.

Proposal for 2014 – 17

3. Discussions with officers at the 3 District Councils – Ashfield, Broxtowe and Mansfield - regarding options for future delivery of the urban, rural and weed spray service in those districts have been on-going since last summer.
4. As a result a proposal has been received from all 3 Districts to deliver this service on behalf of the County Council for the next 3 years with the option of extending the arrangement by a further 2 years. Under this arrangement the districts would also be the primary contact for any service requests or complaints.
5. A review of the costs indicates that over the 3 years proposed this arrangement would be cost neutral to the County Council.
6. This proposal will also support a focus on the continued improvement of the direct delivery of the service across the rest of the County.
7. There were no staff transfers relating to this service area when the service transferred from the Districts to the County for the 2013 season and County staff delivering the service in 2013 will be redeployed to alternative duties within the County Council.

Future Service Delivery Model

8. The proposal for 2014 – 17 will provide time for a more detailed review of the delivery of highway environmental maintenance in the longer term and importantly provide a longer lead time to mobilise any alternative arrangements in the future
9. The detailed review will consider:
 - a. In-house delivery;
 - b. District Council delivery;
 - c. Town and Parish Council delivery;
 - d. External delivery;
 - e. Mixed economies of the above options.
10. The outcome of the review will need to be completed and approved by March 2015 to give two years to implement the new arrangements and mobilise effectively.

Reason for Recommendation

11. To make provision for the delivery of this service from 2014 onwards.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

13. The £457,000 cost of the District Councils delivering this service will be contained within the highways revenue budget.

RECOMMENDATION/S

1. That highway environmental services including grass cutting and weed spraying in the Districts of Ashfield, Broxtowe and Mansfield are delivered by those District Councils for the next 3 years and that this arrangement may be extended by a further 2 years.

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Constitutional Comments (NAB 21.01.14)

The Transport and Highway Committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments (TMR 22.01.14)

The financial implications are set out in paragraph 0 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All