

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Environment and Transport
<b>Date:</b>	16 January 2018
<b>Title:</b>	Parish Lengthsman Scheme
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

**Contact name:** Colin Taylor

**Tel:** 01962 846753

**Email:** colin.taylor@hants.gov.uk

### 1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport gives approval for the continuation of the Parish Lengthsman Scheme for the 2018/2019 financial year, with Highway funding for the participating parish and town Councils maintained at 2017/18 funding levels, at a cost of £206,800 to the County Council's Highways Revenue budget for the 2018/19 financial year.
- 1.2. That the Executive Member for Environment and Transport approves the principle of extending the existing Parish Lengthsman Scheme to include additional parish and town councils that have expressed an interest in joining the scheme prior to 31st January 2018, at additional cost to the County Council's Highways Revenue budget for the 2018/19 financial year subject to the availability of funding.
- 1.3. That authority is delegated to the Director of Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Executive Member for Environment and Transport, to make the necessary arrangements to extend the scheme to new parishes when funding is confirmed, providing the increase in costs can be accommodated within the Highways Revenue Budget.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive Member for Environment and Transport with an update on the Parish Lengthsman Scheme ("the scheme").
- 2.2. This paper seeks to
  - Set out the background to the scheme;
  - Consider the finance for the scheme and the impact on the budget; and
  - Consider the future direction of the scheme (next steps).

### 3. Contextual information

- 3.1 The Parish Lengthsman scheme is valued by Parish and Town Councils as it allows them to prioritise and undertake low value, low risk maintenance work

within their villages and towns. It provides a mechanism for local delivery of specific work that is important to the Parish/Town Council and the Community, and would be a low priority for the County Council when assessed against the countywide highway maintenance needs. The Parish Lengthsman Scheme is a discretionary service area funded from the Highways Revenue Budget, which also funds significant statutory responsibilities. With the ongoing pressure on revenue funds due to removal of Government rate support grant funding and rising demand in social care services, it is inevitable that this programme will be kept under review, and options considered for more sustainable funding arrangements in the future.

- 3.2 The scheme was first trialled in 2010 with two clusters of approximately 10 parishes, each with a lead parish. Under the scheme, Hampshire County Council funds individual parishes at a rate of £1,000 each per annum to employ a local Lengthsman to carry out simple and straightforward tasks such as vegetation clearance and sign cleaning on highway and parish areas. Since then the number of parishes involved has increased year on year, with 36 parish councils joining in the current financial year, bringing the total number of participating councils up to 172.
- 3.3 There are currently 29 lead parishes who administer a cluster consisting of between one to twelve parishes. A 10% administration allowance is added to the £1,000 per parish, and this is paid to the lead parish of each cluster.
- 3.4 It is recognised that, given the current financial climate and unfunded revenue pressures in other Hampshire County Council services, the continuation of the scheme into the future in its current form cannot be guaranteed. The scheme is discretionary and funded out of the Highway Maintenance revenue budget which is under severe pressure.
- 3.5 40 additional parishes were invited to join the scheme in August 2017, 12 of which are still to take up the offer, and to date a further 10 parishes have submitted requests to join the scheme and are currently on a waiting list for consideration to be included within the 2018/19 financial year.
- 3.6 Any additional parishes wishing to join the scheme will only be permitted if expressions of interest have been received prior to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2018 and additional funding for any parishes joining the scheme can be identified from other sources.
- 3.7 In addition, three parish councils employ Lengthsmen without any County Council funding and these operate under a similar contract with the County Council.

#### **4 Finance**

- 4.1 With 170 parishes participating at an expense of £1,100 each (including the administrative fee), Fleet and Yateley town councils receiving £3,300, and 12 parishes still trying to set up new or join existing clusters, the total cost to the County Council's Highways Revenue budget for the 2018/19 financial year will be £206,800.
- 4.2 The County Council supports the principal of extending the scheme to include other parishes wishing to join, which is expected to be between 10 and 15 parishes at a cost of up to £16,500. With the Highways Revenue budget under

increasing pressure, such an expansion would be subject to additional funding being confirmed.

- 4.3 If all participating parishes, all those invited in August 2017, and those on the waiting list are given places in the 2018/19 scheme, the cost to the Economy, Transport and Environment budget will be £223,300.
- 4.4 For the past 2 financial years the Culture, Communities & Business Services Department contributed £30,000 to the scheme to fund works carried out by Lengthsman on footpaths, bridleways and other Rights of Way.

## **5 Performance**

- 5.1 Details of the works carried out by Lengthsman, on behalf of the parishes, are included in reports provided by the parishes when submitting their invoices, and also through monitoring carried out by the Highway Depots.
- 5.2 Work completed by Lengthsman on countryside elements of work is supplied by the parishes through Rights of Way management's IT system, known as CAMSweb (Countryside Access Management System).

## **6 Future direction**

- 6.1 Several parishes have expressed a wish to expand the list of tasks that Lengthsman are permitted to carry out, for example:
  - Working on high speed roads;
  - Clearing blocked grips, gullies and weir kerbs;
  - Strimming of vegetation on junctions for visibility;
  - Use of small plant such as mini excavators;
  - Use of chemicals for weed treatment;
  - Erection of traffic management (signing and guarding); and
  - Pothole repairs.
- 6.2 Before Lengthsman can be permitted to carry out an extended range of tasks consideration needs to be given to the County Council's statutory responsibilities in relation to repairs to highway defects; the competencies of the Lengthsman and the need to protect the safety of the Lengthsman and highway users with appropriate traffic management while works are carried out.
- 6.3 Within the new Hampshire Highways Service Contract (HHSC), the contractor is required to provide support in the area of Community Engagement, including support and assistance with the Parish Lengthsman Scheme. Such assistance could come in the form of additional training for Lengthsman on safe working practices on the highway and assistance with traffic management and disposal of green waste. Discussions have already commenced between Skanska and the County Council regarding Traffic Management training for the Lengthsman.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:</b>	yes
<b>People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:</b>	yes

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

DocumentLocation

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1 The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

**Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2 Equalities Impact Assessment:**

The Parish Lengthsman Scheme seeks to ensure that local highways and amenity issues are resolved at a local level promoting a good quality of life, now and in the future. It seeks to benefit all users encompassing all those with protected characteristics, and the flexibility of local prioritisation provides scope to address particular issues at a community level.

### **2 Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1 The development of the scheme has no impact on Crime and Disorder.

### **3 Climate Change:**

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

The scheme promotes works to be carried out manually by local contractors with very little use of mechanical plant, which will not adversely affect the carbon footprint of the activities completed.