

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Lead Member for Universal Services
<b>Date:</b>	23 January 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Parish Lengthsman Service
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Universal Services

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### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out a proposal by the County Council to withdraw the current funding provision for the Parish Lengthsman service. The proposal is then to utilise external funding to enable the service to be delivered for the financial year 2023/24 (via the Hampshire Highways Service Contract (HHSC)), thereby retaining the valuable contribution the service makes to local highways maintenance.

### Recommendations

2. That the Executive Lead Member for Universal Services approves the removal of the current funding provision for the Parish Lengthsman Service, to secure recurring financial savings in line with agreed SP23 Proposals, amounting to £200,000.
3. That the Executive Lead Member for Universal Services agrees to an alternative funding proposal, whereby external funding is provided through the current Hampshire Highways Services Contract (HHSC) with Milestone Infrastructure, to enable the service to be delivered in 2023/24.

### Executive Summary

4. This paper seeks to set out a proposal by the County Council to withdraw the current funding provision for the Parish Lengthsman service. The proposal is then to utilise external funding to enable the service to be delivered for the financial year 2023/24 via the HHSC, thereby retaining the valuable contribution the service makes to local highways maintenance.

### Contextual Information

5. The current Parish Lengthsman scheme in Hampshire has been in place since 2010. It enables Parish Councils to undertake a range of permitted duties in support of local responsiveness, and the improvement of the environment on a local basis.

6. While activities undertaken via the Parish Lengthsman Scheme are non-statutory, they add considerable value to the wider Highways Maintenance activities undertaken by the County Council on a countywide basis.
7. Lengthsmen are empowered to resolve issues which may be seen as relatively low priority in the context of the wider Highways Maintenance programme, but which improve the environment and conditions on a localised basis.
8. Works permitted to be undertaken by Parish Lengthsmen fall under the broad headings of 'Minor Works', 'Drainage' and 'Signage', and some of these works may be undertaken on the live carriageway – subject to relevant training been undertaken to ensure the Lengthsmen are able to operate safely in this context. At the same time, the County Council has also made it clear which types of duty are not permitted to be undertaken by a Parish Lengthsman.
9. A full list of currently permitted tasks is included at Appendix A.
10. Currently, 186 parishes across Hampshire take advantage of the scheme, normally receiving £1,100 per annum funding from the County Council to finance works undertaken (with some historical exceptions, on a case-by-case basis). The total current cost of the service is £200,000
11. It should be noted that some parishes now deliver the Lengthsman Service without financial support from the County Council.

### **Hampshire Highways Service Contract & Alternative Funding Proposal**

12. The proposal is to withdraw the current funding provision for the Service, but to then utilise an external funding opportunity to ensure the Service can continue to be delivered in 2023/24.
13. The proposed withdrawal of existing funding is part of the County Council's wider strategy to deliver a balanced budget, in the context of an £80million funding shortfall, by 1 April 2023.
14. The external funding provision for 2023/24 would come via the HHSC.
15. The HHSC is a contractual arrangement between Hampshire County Council and Milestone Infrastructure for the delivery of Highways Maintenance services. Following the decision by the Executive Lead Member for Transport and Environment Strategy on 3 October 2022, this contractual relationship will continue for a further five years until 30 April 2029.
16. One of the opportunities available to the County Council in securing a five-year extension of the contractual arrangement, was the availability of support for community initiatives including the Parish Lengthsman service, as part of a wider set of opportunities to enhance the Highways Service throughout the period.

### **Finance**

17. The withdrawal of the current funding provision for how the Parish Lengthsman Service is delivered, will secure recurring financial savings for Hampshire County Council in line with agreed SP23 Proposals, amounting to £200,000.
18. The service will continue, funded through the Community Initiatives work of the highways contractor.

## **Performance**

19. No impact upon performance is envisaged, as the proposal is to change the funding of the scheme in 2023/24, rather than make changes to the operation of the Parish Lengthsman Scheme.
20. The County Council will continue to seek information on return on spend from Parish Councils, to ensure clear visibility of value for money derived from the scheme. Parish Councils will continue to be expected to submit returns on a quarterly basis and are given best practice examples for how to complete returns.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

21. The proposal to withdraw current review funding from the Parish Lengthsman Scheme was not directly referenced in the "Balancing the Budget" consultation (July 2021), but forms part of the wider strategy to deliver a balanced budget in the context of an £80million budget shortfall, as outlined in that consultation.
22. However, the County Council also directly consults with Parish Councils over the Parish Lengthsman Service on an annual basis, primarily through annual correspondence with Member Parishes, and an annual Highways event for Parish Councils
23. The proposal is to change how the Service is funded. However, given that alternative funding is available for 2023/24, and that as a consequence the service provided will not change, this proposal is considered to have a neutral impact upon all protected characteristics and other relevant groups.
24. The name 'Lengthsman' is a historic term which has been in use for over 200 years, referring to someone who kept a "length" of road or canal neat, tidy and passable and carried out minor maintenance with particular emphasis on boundary marking.

## **Climate Change Impact Assessments**

25. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.
26. The tools employed by the County Council to assess impacts on climate change adaptation and mitigation were utilised and found not to be applicable on grounds that the decision relates to an alternative funding mechanism to make revenue savings without any impact on service delivery. As and when this approach is reviewed, further assessments will be undertaken to gauge the impacts of any change.

## **Climate Change Adaptation**

27. These proposals are not vulnerable to the risk of Climate Change.

## **Carbon Mitigation**

28. There are no specific Carbon Mitigation initiatives associated with this proposal. However, work undertaken by Lengthsmen will be complementary to ongoing HHSC delivery with Milestone Infrastructure, which contains a commitment by Milestone to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2030.

## **Conclusions**

29. In order to secure recurring financial savings to achieve a balanced budget, it is necessary for the County Council to withdraw the current funding provision for how the Parish Lengthsman service is delivered. However, the identification of external funding, via the HHSC and its commitment to support community initiatives such as the Parish Lengthsman Scheme, will enable the Service to be delivered in the Financial Year 2023/24.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

<b>Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:</b>	no
<b>People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:</b>	no
<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

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>	
<u>Title</u> HHSC Contract Extension	<u>Date</u> 03 Oct 2022
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

**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.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

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 by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

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

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- 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.

### **2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

The proposal is to change how the Service is funded. However, given that alternative funding is available for 2023/24, and that as a consequence the service provided will not change, this proposal is considered to have a neutral impact upon all protected characteristics and other relevant groups.

## **Appendix A – Schedule of Permitted Tasks**

The following schedule lists the duties the Parish Lengthsman **may** undertake in Hampshire.

### **1 Drainage**

- Clearing existing drainage grips
- Maintaining ditches
- Cleaning channels
- Clearing outfalls
- Rodding pipes (off highway)

### **2 Signage**

- Cleaning (non-illuminated)
- Minor repairs

### **3 Other Minor Works**

- Remove soil/detritus and leaves
- Cutting back vegetation overhanging the road or footway
- Clearing footways of weeds/moss and leaves
- Removing vegetation from parapets or fences
- Grass strimming
- Reporting defects
- Sweeping
- Litter picking
- Removing fly posters
- Unauthorised sign and graffiti removal
- Cleaning street name plates
- Cleaning bus shelters
- Minor repairs to street furniture
- 'Village upkeep' to include: painting/staining of bus shelters, parish owned notice boards, benches, fences, pavilions,