
REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 16 JULY 2014**PORTFOLIO: ENVIRONMENT****REPORT FROM HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES****SUBJECT: COUNTY HIGHWAY RANGER FUNCTIONS****1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That the Council enters into an agency arrangement with Essex County Council to directly employ highway rangers within the District.

2 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT REFERENCE No: 11/14**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The County Council has recently offered the Council the opportunity to directly engage local highway rangers enabling closer involvement with local delivery and the management of local priorities. Such arrangements have been progressively introduced in other Districts since 2005 and are now in place for the majority of the Districts within Essex.
- 3.2 This service would be fully funded by the County Council and would complement the range of District Council functions such as litter, fly-tipping and graffiti removal, together with verge cutting, which is also undertaken on behalf of the County Council.

4 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 4.1 The highway rangers deliver immediate improvements to the road and path network, working to the requirements of the Local Highways Panel. It is intended that they would integrate and co-ordinate work programme with the Council's existing grounds maintenance and street scene teams. The scope of the works include:-

- Cleaning and minor repairs to non-electrical road signs.
- Cleaning and minor repairs to street furniture.
- Reinstatement of posts and bollards (minimal/excavation).
- Trimming of vegetation and removal of cuttings.
- Ad-hoc grass cutting and strimming.
- Localised cleaning and clearing of roadside water channels.
- Removal of illegal signs and fly posting.
- Minor block flag paving repairs.

- Painting of street furniture.
- 4.2 The repair of potholes and the maintenance of electrical road signs do not fall within the remit of the highway rangers and no activities can be undertaken on roads where the speed limit exceeds 30mph. The rationale for these exclusions is that the rangers do not have the authority to put in place traffic management arrangements, to undertake any excavations of a highway and only have access to hand tools.
- 4.3 Work instructions will be provided by ECC via the Local Highways Panel or public requests received by email to highway.enquiries@essex.gov.uk or directly from the website.
- 4.4 The County has confirmed that this arrangement can continue for an indefinite term or until such time as the funding is withdrawn.
- 4.5 ECC has confirmed that further funding will be available for other localism projects such as flood alleviation, weed spraying and other maintenance works as part of a broader partnership arrangement. The full details have yet to be finalised.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not to take on the highway ranger functions, but to leave them directly employed and managed by the County Council.

6 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The County has confirmed that there are no risks relating to the transfer of existing County Council highway rangers, as their current staff will be redeployed.
- 6.2 The main risk allocated with this proposal relates to redundancy payments in the event that the arrangement is terminated. If the County terminated the arrangement but employed their own rangers, then the legal provisions relating to the transfer of undertakings (TUPE) would apply. If the arrangement was to be terminated and not continued, then this Council would have to fund the redundancy costs. The highway ranger agency arrangements with Districts date back to 2005, the termination of this service is therefore considered to be a relatively low risk.
- 6.3 There are potential reputational risks for this Council in the event that the expectations of residents are raised and there is a shortfall in funding. At this point in time there is no clarity on the backlog of work, if any, relating to the Rochford District.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Funding of £130,000 will be provided per annum to operate the highway ranger functions via the Local Highways Panel. This includes provision of

£80,000 for the salaries of two staff, a vehicle and associated materials and equipment. This will cover all direct costs associated with the posts including employer on-costs, but would not cover existing overheads that are normally applied to Council posts.

- 7.2 In addition, as part of a broader partnership arrangement, ECC are proposing to provide an additional £50,000 for flood alleviation and other measures which are to be directly managed by this authority. Further discussion is required with the County to clarify whether any additional funding will be required other than that already committed in respect of highway verges.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications. The operation of this agency function will not include the formal delegation of statutory powers, such as the service of notices on land owners in respect of overgrown hedgerow.
- 8.2 It is not proposed at this time to have a legal agreement with the County in respect of these arrangements, but a service level agreement will be formulated in order to ensure that appropriate notice is received in respect of any changes.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____



Head of Environmental Services

Background Papers:-

None.

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