

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a response to a number of outstanding issues in connection with the draft specifications for the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting on 14 & 15 January 1999, this Panel considered the draft specification for the Grounds Maintenance Contract. As a result of those considerations it was agreed that Officers would:

1. Investigate the possibility of seeking sponsorship from commercial organisations for the maintenance of grassed areas and / or planted areas on roadside verges and roundabouts.
2. Seek advice from Southend On Sea Borough Council concerning the operation of a scheme to prevent unauthorised parking on roadside verges
3. Discuss with the County Council, as the Highways Authority, the possibility of co-ordinating verge and road maintenance programmes.

2.2 Grass verge and roundabout sponsorship

- 2.2.1 The seeking of local sponsorship for grassed and/or planted areas on roadside verges and roundabouts proved very difficult. The great majority of roundabouts in the district are hard standing (mini) roundabouts. The very nature of this type of roundabout its size and construction, does not lend itself well to the type of planting and soft landscaping which might encourage commercial sponsorship.
- 2.2.2 The only soft landscaped roundabout in the district is on Cherry Orchard Way off the B1013. This roundabout is the responsibility of Essex County Council to maintain. Officers have been advised by County Council Officers that any application to sponsor a planting scheme for this roundabout would need to be made direct to the County Council which has a set of guidelines and procedures relating to plant types and size that have to be followed.
- 2.2.3 The difficulties Officers faced in investigating the possibilities of sponsorship for the maintenance of grassed and/or planted areas on roadside verges were concerned with the ownership and location of the verged area. Many of the verged areas in the district are under the

ownership and responsibility of the County Council. As with roundabouts any application for sponsorship of verged areas would need to be made direct to the County Council. The applicant would require a Right to plant licence. Those areas which are District Council owned are not always clearly defined, often relatively small and not always in locations which would appeal to commercial sponsors.

However Officers did contact several local commercial businesses for sponsorship but were unsuccessful.

2.3 Unauthorised parking on grassed verges

Officers of the Council contacted the Traffic Manager of Southend On Sea, to learn more of the way in which that authority deals with the problem of unauthorised parking on grassed verges. Southend's approach to the problem is to use the powers under Section 6 of the Essex Act 1987. This is an Act of Parliament, which is enforceable throughout Essex, and allows the police to prosecute motorists for driving or parking on grassed verges. Whilst the responsibility for enforcement and prosecution lies with the Chief Constable of Essex, local authorities can undertake additional enforcement and prosecution through the magistrates courts. However the advice received from the Officers at Southend is that this can be a resource intensive exercise both in terms of cost and Officer time in patrolling and pursuing violations that occur. As a result of this Southend have made a decision not to bring any prosecutions of their own. To combat the effects of unauthorised parking, the Southend on Sea Borough Council Leisure Services Department produce and erect signs referring to the Essex Act along lengths of verge which suffer damage. Any future offences, which occur on areas supporting signs, are then open to prosecution. Whilst Southend do not claim that this eliminates the problem, it has had the effect of reducing the number of violations quite significantly.

2.4 Co ordination of verge and road maintenance by Essex County Council

Officers contacted the Highways Regional office in Rayleigh regarding the co-ordination of the District's cleansing works with the county road maintenance programme. The response from the County was positive and Officers will liaise to ensure both programmes are co-ordinated.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 A reduction in the damage to grass verges will enhance the local environment.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The cost of producing and installing the sign can be met from existing budgets.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 It is proposed that this Panel **RECOMMENDS**

1. That the Leisure & Client Services Division produce and install signs referring to Section 6 of the Essex Act 1987 in areas where unauthorised parking on grassed verges is a problem.
2. That Officers liaise with the County Council Highways Division to co-ordinate cleansing of the central reservation of the A127 & A130 with their road maintenance programme. (HLCS)

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Background Papers

None.

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