

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
RESOURCES DIRECTORATE	OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	16 JANUARY 2018	4
BOROUGH WIDE TREATMENT OF WEEDS			

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

This report proposes the reinstatement of the borough wide weed spraying programme to include 3 sprays per annum to take place in May, July and September, subject to availability and weather conditions. This is in response to LCC's confirmation of an increase in public realm payments back to the 2014 level guaranteed for a period of 3 years.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Operational Management Committee is requested to consider and approve the reinstatement of the borough wide weed spraying programme, the cost of which will be contained within existing approved revenue budgets.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

The Chairman of the Operational Management Committee, Councillor David Eaves, wrote to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, County Councillor John Fillis, requesting that LCC reconsider their plans for a further reduction to the public realm payments however the response was unfavourable. At the committee meeting on the 8th March 2016 officers were tasked with considering the detailed implications of the budget reductions and investigating alternative means of service delivery. It was also agreed to undertake an initial spring spray of weeds in the interim.

At the Operational Management Committee in May 2016 Members voted in favour of a proposal to introduce an in-house borough wide weed treatment process using mechanical removal as an alternative to chemical spraying.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	✓
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	✓
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	✓
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	✓

REPORT

1. By virtue of Section 1(2) of the Highways Act 1980 the County Council are the Highway Authority for highways other than trunk roads in the County of Lancashire. Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 19 of the Local Government Act 2000 enable a local authority to arrange for the discharge of their functions by any other local authority.
2. The County Council and the Borough Council (the Council) have historically agreed to make arrangements for the undertaking of certain highway authority functions by the Council and have reached an understanding on various highway related matters on the terms and conditions of this agreement. In return the County Council has agreed to reimburse the Council for carrying out these duties by means of an annual payment. The County Council makes this annual payment to the Council in respect of the following public realm activities: verge maintenance, leaf clearance, weed control and windblown sand clearance.
3. In response to financial challenges facing local authorities the County Council found it necessary to review all service provision to meet required target reductions in spending which resulted in a subsequent reduction of 25% to the public realm payments over a 3 year period (2014 – 2017)
4. The agreed three year reduction was profiled in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy however in February 2016 LCC informed the Council that a further reduction of 10% would be made for the 2016/17 financial year.
5. The delegated services delivered on behalf of the County Council are part of the cleansing and grounds maintenance services carried out directly by the Council and the reduction will have a corresponding adverse effect upon the Council's own service provision and resource requirements. These are high profile services maintaining the cleanliness and amenity of the borough that deliver the 'clean and green' priority.
7. A request was made that LCC reconsider their plans for a further reduction to the public realm payments however the response was unfavourable. Officers were subsequently tasked with considering the detailed implications of the budget reductions and investigating alternative means of service delivery that would meet the cleansing requirements and provide options for weed control.
8. At the Operational Management Committee in May 2016 Members voted in favour of a proposal to introduce an in-house borough wide weed treatment process using mechanical removal as an alternative to chemical spraying. A final chemical spray took place in June 2016 and mechanical weed removal commenced in January 2017.
9. The new service option experienced some operational challenges that resulted in progress being slower than anticipated. The warm weather in early spring together with wet and humid conditions provided an ideal climate for weed growth over the summer which also hampered the mechanical removal program. As a result a decision was taken to carry out a supplementary borough wide weed spray in July/August; with a second spray commissioned in September 2017.
10. Lancashire County Council have subsequently committed to reinstating the public realm grant to its original value for a period of 3 years making it possible to return to a three spray program of weed treatment with the Committee's approval. This will be supplemented with mechanical removal in suitable areas and hand spraying as required. The cost of the reinstated level of service will be contained within existing approved revenue budgets.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	The cost of the reinstated level of the weed-spraying service will be contained within existing approved revenue budgets.
Legal	There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
Community Safety	There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
Human Rights and Equalities	There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	A return to 3 sprays per annum will have a positive impact on the overall cleanliness and amenity of the borough.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	There are no direct legal implications arising from the report.

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
REDUCTION OF LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC REALM PAYMENTS	15/12/2016	https://fylde.cmis.uk.com
UPDATE ON THE REDUCTION OF LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC REALM PAYMENTS	31/03/2016	https://fylde.cmis.uk.com
PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER BOROUGH WIDE WEED TREATMENT USING MECHANICAL REMOVAL	31/05/2016	https://fylde.cmis.uk.com