

DECISION ITEM



| REPORT OF | MEETING | DATE | ITEM NO |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------|---------|
| RESOURCES DIRECTORATE | OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE | 31 MAY 2016 | 6 |
| PROPOSAL TO CONSIDER BOROUGH WIDE WEED TREATMENT USING MECHANICAL REMOVAL | | | |

PUBLIC ITEM

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

SUMMARY

This report details a proposal to consider the introduction of an in-house borough wide weed treatment process using mechanical removal as an alternative to chemical spraying. This is in response to LCC's reduction in public realm payments and challenges in maintaining the current standards of service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION

The Operational Management Committee is requested to consider and recommend to the Finance & Democracy Committee the approval of a fully funded capital budget increase for Vehicle Purchases of £57,000 in 2016/17, fully funded from various Revenue Budget Virements from 2016/17 and future years as detailed within the report and to authorise the expenditure for the purchase of two Nilfisk City Ranger ride on sweepers with weed ripper attachments to carry out the removal of weeds across Fylde.

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. The spray is scheduled to commence on the 16th May 2016 subject to weather conditions.

| 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, which includes weed spraying. In return the County Council has agreed to reimburse the Council for carrying out these duties by means of an annual payment.
3. In response to the current financial challenges facing local authorities the County Council advised the Council that payments made in respect of public realm activities would be reduced over a 3 year period by a total of 25%. A further reduction of 10% has been made for the 2016/17 financial year.
4. 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.
5. In order to sustain service standards and meet the expectation of Fylde customers unfunded revenue budget increases were included in budget proposals for weed control to cover the shortfall in recent years. Even with budget increases, rising labour cost, and chemicals and equipment prices have resulted in the need to consider changes in service delivery i.e. a reduction in weed spraying from 3 sprays to 2 sprays per annum.
6. The additional budget cut of 10% will make it impossible to continue with even 2 sprays without requesting Members to approve an unfunded budget increase. If the payment is further reduced in future the Council could be in a position where it is taking on County Council responsibilities without the corresponding resources.
7. The Operational Management committee has tasked officers with investigating alternative means of service delivery to ensure the continuation of effective weed treatment across the borough in the line with shrinking budgets.
8. As part of the approved capital fleet replacement programme, the handheld pavement sweepers (Green Machines) are scheduled for replacement. Fylde officers have investigated and experimented with different types of equipment and machinery over recent months to find a solution that will meet the cleansing requirements while providing options for weed control.
9. The Nilfisk City Ranger is a compact ride on sweeping machine with a wide range of versatile attachments including a weed ripping brush. The weed brush efficiently removes weeds from streets and paved areas and prevents new seedlings from germinating. It is extremely manoeuvrable and hydraulically adjustable in all directions, allows the driver to vary the brush ground pressure and target specific areas. Working repeatedly with the weed brush will prevent the establishment of seedlings without using pesticides.
10. Rochdale Council are using a fleet of 4 Nilfisk City Rangers for non-chemical weed removal with excellent results. The staff are reportedly very happy with the operation of the unit which receives positive comments from local residents. Before and after photos of weed clearances in Rochdale are included as an appendix to this report together with a Rochdale case study.

11. The financing options detailed in the appendix shows the relevant budgets for capital and revenue for the current position and the corresponding budgets for the proposed option displaying the full financing of the proposal. This solution has been worked through to support the public realm cuts in relation to Sand, Leaf and Weed clearance and no additional revenue budget have been requested for this as it is being contained within existing budgets and resources.

| IMPLICATIONS | |
|---|---|
| Finance | The Operational Management Committee is requested to consider and recommend to the Finance & Democracy Committee the approval of a fully funded capital budget increase for Vehicle Purchases of £57,000 in 2016/17 fully funded from various Revenue Budget Virements from 2016/17 and future years detailed within the report, and to authorise the expenditure. The proposal in the report essentially involves using existing revenue budgets allocated for weed spraying costs to pay the revenue cost of borrowing to purchase additional vehicles for non-chemical weed removal. |
| Legal | There are no direct legal implications arising from the report |
| Community Safety | There are no direct community safety implications arising from the report |
| Human Rights and Equalities | There are no direct human rights and equalities implications arising from the report |
| Sustainability and Environmental Impact | There are no direct sustainability and environmental impact implications arising from the report |
| Health & Safety and Risk Management | There are no direct health and safety and risk management implications arising from the report |

| LEAD AUTHOR | TEL | DATE | DOC ID |
|------------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------|
| Kathy Winstanley | 01253 658634 | 13 th May 2016 | |

| LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS | | |
|---------------------------|------|--------------------------------|
| Name of document | Date | Where available for inspection |
| none | | |

Attached document(s)

1. Before and after photographs showing weed treatment in Rochdale
2. Rochdale Nifisk case study
3. Financing proposal