

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL****Decision Report**

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member - Environment
<b>Date:</b>	9 March 2010
<b>Title:</b>	Highway Weed Control Agency Agreements
<b>Reference:</b>	1390
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Environment

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## **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1. There is a need to provide for the weed control to be carried out in Basingstoke and Deane, Eastleigh and Havant districts in 2010-11.
- 1.2. In recent years this work in these areas has been carried out by the district councils on behalf of the County Council as a pilot trial but this arrangement cannot continue without further authority.
- 1.3. The trials with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council have yielded a level of service that is satisfactory but not significantly different from that experienced from the previous highways term maintenance contract. The anticipated savings from the transfer have not been realised when the district councils' costs are compared to the current Term Highways Contract. However, the arrangement has been convenient to the County Council in terms of management. Also, the cost of including these areas in the Term Highways Contract is uncertain and cannot be quantified since it would be dependent on negotiation with Amey.
- 1.4. In the longer term it is considered desirable to review the highway maintenance related work that potentially could be done or is currently done by district councils, before committing to longer term agency arrangements.
- 1.5. It is recommended that, in order to provide for the continuance of the service in the immediate term, the existing arrangements with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council be continued for a further year from April 2010.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council have carried out the highway weed control in their areas on behalf of the County Council since 2007. Authority was given for this arrangement by the Executive Member for Environment on 20 March 2007 as a one-year pilot, and the arrangement has been extended annually since then.

## **3. Outcomes of the pilot trials**

- 3.1. Originally the work was transferred to these three district councils because a cost saving was anticipated by doing so, when compared against the old Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services Limited contract, which was in place at the time. The saving against the 2005-06 works cost in the first year (2007-08) was £47,000, most of which was made in Basingstoke and Deane district. This saving is not realised, however, with the new Amey contract because the Amey unit rates for weed control are significantly lower than the rate paid for the service from the district councils.
- 3.2. Since the work was transferred to the three district councils, annual reports on their performance, including complaints monitoring, have been satisfactory. There has not been a significant change to the level of service by having transferred the work to the three district councils but the local highway managers have been satisfied with the arrangement and are keen for it to continue. Once again, following the most recent weed control season in 2009 reports from the three district councils and corresponding highway managers have been satisfactory.
- 3.3. In 2009-10 Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council contracted the weed control to Complete Weed Control (CWC). CWC performed well. The number of complaints was minimal and the contractor's record-keeping, organisation and liaison were excellent. Havant Borough Council contracted the weed control to Charlton Environmental Limited and carried out some follow-up troubleshooting with their own staff. Charlton Environmental's performance was satisfactory and they were particularly proactive and responsive. There was no significant difference to the level of complaints.
- 3.4. Eastleigh Borough Council contracted the weed control to Total Vegetation Management (TVM) in 2009-10. The overall weed control programme was successful. However, the level of control from TVM was not as good as in previous years, particularly following the first treatment. Additional resources had to be used to mechanically remove weeds that had been missed as well as treated (dead) weeds, and more officer intervention than expected was necessary. In response to the level of complaints and the number of weeds missed a more robust inspection regime was introduced, which improved the situation for the second treatment. Eastleigh Borough Council has been responsive and proactive with its management of the weed control service and plans to improve the service for the next season by employing a different contractor for the first treatment. The Borough Council proposes to use its

own staff subsequently, to apply herbicide as required for the rest of the growing season. With this plan it anticipates a higher standard of weed control, an improvement in the street-scene environment and a more environmentally friendly and sustainable use of resources.

#### **4. Current situation**

- 4.1. Now further authority is needed in order to continue to give this work to the district councils in the coming financial year.
- 4.2. There is no provision in the Term Highways Contract for the Basingstoke and Deane, Eastleigh and Havant district areas because these had been excluded by the time the contract started. Consequently, if the existing arrangements with these three district councils were not to be extended the inclusion of these areas in the Term Highways Contract would be by negotiation with Amey. The cost is uncertain and cannot be quantified since there is no certainty of matching the existing Amey rates.
- 4.3. The subject of this report was considered by the Highways and Transport Branch Management Team on 10 December 2009. It was considered desirable to carry out a wider review of the highway maintenance related work that potentially could be done or is currently done by district councils, before committing to longer term agency arrangements. The idea for such a review is in the context of such factors as the cheap rates for weed control in the Term Highways Contract, the fact that other district councils remain interested in taking over weed control, aspirations for a higher standard of weed control and potential for a wider sharing of highway maintenance related work between the district councils and the County Council.
- 4.4. Pending an outcome of any review, continuing the current arrangement with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council for a further year is recommended. In order to effect this it is necessary to sign revised agency agreements with the three district councils (modifying the dates of the term and incorporating some other updates). These are being drafted currently.

#### **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1. The trials with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council have yielded a level of service that is satisfactory but not significantly different from that experienced from the previous highways term maintenance contract with Balfour Beatty Infrastructure Services Limited. The anticipated savings from the transfer have not been realised when the district councils' costs are compared to the current Term Highways Contract. However, the arrangement has been convenient to the County Council in terms of management. Also, the cost of including these areas in the Term Highways Contract is uncertain and cannot be quantified since it would be dependent on negotiation with Amey.

- 5.2. In the longer term it is desirable to review the highway maintenance related work that potentially could be done or is currently done by district councils, before committing to longer term agency arrangements.
- 5.3. In the immediate term, in order for the weed control in Basingstoke and Deane, Eastleigh and Havant districts to be carried out in 2010-11, it is necessary to obtain authority at least to continue the current arrangement for a further year or else make other arrangements for the work to be done at short notice.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That approval be given for the extension, for a further year from 1 April 2010, of the arrangements whereby Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, Eastleigh Borough Council and Havant Borough Council carry out highway weed control in their areas.
- 6.2 That a review of the weed control arrangements is carried out over the next year with a view to reporting on revised arrangements for the 2011/12 financial year.

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): N/A	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	no
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): N/A	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate): N/A	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Weed Control – District Agency Arrangements	Item 9	20/03/2007

**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	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

1.1 No change anticipated.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

2.1. No change anticipated.

### **3. Climate Change:**

a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

No change anticipated.

b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No change anticipated.