

**HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Decision Report**

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment
<b>Date:</b>	21 March 2016
<b>Title:</b>	Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update
<b>Reference:</b>	7292
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment

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**1. Executive Summary**

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to confirm continuity of the Parish Lengthsman Scheme for 2016/2017 to be funded at a rate of £1000 per Parish plus 10% administration.

1.2. This paper seeks to

- set out the background to the project;
- consider the finance for the project and the impact on the budget;
- briefly consider the future direction of the project (next steps).

**2. Contextual background information**

2.1. The Parish Lengthsman Scheme was first trialled in 2010 with two clusters of approximately 10 parishes each, each with a “lead parish”. Under the scheme, Hampshire County Council funds individual parishes at a rate of £1000 each per annum to employ a local “lengthsman” to carry out simple and straightforward tasks such as vegetation clearance and sign cleaning on highways and parish areas. Since then it has developed steadily and currently after five years growth there are 99 participating parishes. The lead parish engages the lengthsman to conduct these works and administers payments. Individual work schedules are arranged by the individual parishes where the work is required, thus creating a close working relationship between parish and lengthsman. Although relatively slow to take off, the concept is now established and lead parish clerks indicate that once the system is set up it is less onerous to maintain.

2.2. There are currently 19 lead parishes who administer between 13 and 1 parish each, and when questioned on whether or not the scheme should continue they were almost unanimous in asking for continuation. A number of parishes have asked to join in 2016/2017 and it is estimated that this will create a total

of 130 parishes for the coming year. A 10% administration allowance is added to the £1000 per parish and is paid to the lead parish in each group or cluster.

- 2.3. It is recognised that in the current austere economic climate the continuation of this Scheme is under threat from reducing revenue budgets. The Parish Lengthsman scheme is discretionary and is entirely funded out of the diminishing revenue budget. As a result, it will be necessary to review the Scheme to consider its future and what options there might be for sustaining it in the longer term.
- 2.4. A contribution to this review has been made by the Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee which set up a Task and Finish Group specifically for the purpose. The terms of reference were to scrutinise the value for money aspects of the Scheme, to look closely at the funding model and to explore alternative funding sources. Their findings were reported to the Select Committee in Autumn 2015 which resulted in the Committee putting forward recommendations to the Executive Member in November 2015.
- 2.5. As well as recommending that the Scheme be retained at current financial levels, the Select Committee recommended a further review take place if additional entrants place pressure on the available budget and that Parishes should be grouped in clusters to ensure administration is as efficient as possible.

### **3. New Parish Participation**

- 3.1. Additional parishes have expressed an interest in participating in the scheme, and it has been determined that a total of 130 parishes can be funded for the financial year 2016/17, constituting an additional 31 participants. Expression of interest from parishes wishing to participate will be considered if received before the 1<sup>st</sup> April on a first come/first served basis.
- 3.2. So far, 26 parishes have expressed an interest. The list of Parishes (shown in clusters) at time of writing who are likely to join this scheme in April 2016 are:  
  
Worldham, Steep, Sheet, Froxfield and Privett and Colemore  
  
Candovers, Preston Candover, Nutley, Ellisfield, Herriard and Northington  
  
Bramley and Pamber  
  
Yateley, Eversley, Mattingley, Elvetham Heath, Hartley Wintney, Winchfield, Newnham, Mapledurwell, Up Natley, Odiham, Long Sutton, Crondall.
- 3.3 These parishes have been on a waiting list from previous years with an indication of admission pending continuation of the scheme. Parishes who have not previously indicated that they wish to join, or do not do so between now and the 1<sup>st</sup> April, will not be permitted to join the Scheme during 2016/2017. 130 has been set as the maximum number of parishes that can be funded for the Scheme in the coming year.

#### **4. Finance**

- 4.1. Because the Lengthsmen can also carry out work on rights of way, for the year 2016/17 the Scheme is being recognised with £30K from the Rights of Way budget.
- 4.2. With 99 parishes participating at an expense of £1,100 each (£1,000 for the service and £100 for administration fees) the cost to the County Council's Highways Revenue budget has, until now, been £109K.
- 4.3. With an assumed 31 additional parishes joining the scheme in 2016/2017 the total cost will be £143k. As noted above, £30K has now been made available from the Rights of Way budget, and consequently the anticipated cost to the Highways Revenue budget for the year 2016/17 will be £113K .

#### **5. Performance**

- 5.1. Parish feedback will be monitored through regular quarterly reports to Highways Depots and through an IT system known as CAMSweb (Countryside Access Management System) for County Council Rights of Way management.
- 5.2. CAMSweb is not a new system and is one that parish clerks already use to a greater or lesser extent. It maps and describes known problems on rights of way and offers the clerks a ready made selection of potential lengthsmen tasks. Once completed the individual tasks can be closed and marked as "completed by lengthsmen". The funding and process here will increase the linkage between the County Council and the parishes and this will be enhanced by the soon to be appointed "community engagement rangers" who will cover the County and be tasked to improve local connections.

#### **6. Future direction**

- 6.1. Any Parishes requesting to join will be required to be part of a clustered group reflecting the recommendations of the Select Committee. Funding of this Scheme in future will depend on availability of Revenue monies and will need to be reviewed again in Autumn of 2016. For this reason it is recommended that work continues to build on the proposals and findings of the Select Committee with a view to assessing options for the future of the Scheme beyond 2016/17.

#### **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1. That the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment gives approval for the continuation of the Parish Lengthsman Scheme for the financial year 2016/17, to include additional parishes up to a total number of 130 as set out in this report.
- 7.2. That each participating parish for 2016/17 receives the same financial resources to deliver the scheme as in the previous year, to amount to £1,000 per parish with an additional 10% for administrative fees.

- 7.3. That work continues on a general review of the scheme, to include consideration of the Economy, Transport and Environment Select Committee recommendations, with a view to providing the Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Environment with proposals on the future delivery of the scheme at a subsequent decision day.

Rpt/7292/PE

**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):	
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Parish Lengthsman Scheme Update	6392	20 January 2015

**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. Equality Duty**

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

**Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:**

- a) The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;
- b) Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- c) Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

The Parish lengthsman scheme seeks to ensure that local highways and amenity issues are resolved at a local level promoting a good quality of life, now and in the future. It seeks to benefit all users encompassing all those with protected characteristics.

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

2.1. The scheme will have no impact upon rates of crime or disorder.

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

3.1. How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

As the majority of work carried out by the Parish Lengthsmen is hand work it is considered that this Scheme will not alter the existing carbon footprint.

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

By maintaining footpaths and encouraging people to walk upon them this Scheme will be encouraging non motorised transport.