

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM REPORT – 6TH DECEMBER 2012

AGENDA ITEM 8 APPENDIX A

Offer to Devolve Routine Vegetation Clearance of Public Rights of Way (public footpaths, bridleways and byways) to Parish Councils

Overview of Current Service

The Borough Council currently maintains approximately 190 miles of Public Rights of Way, including routine clearance of seasonal vegetation growth, and reactive clearance of fallen trees and branches as and when required.

The Borough Council has a statutory duty to ensure that these public rights of way are maintained in a fit and safe condition for public use. Parish Councils also have powers (but no duties) to maintain public rights of way in their Parish.

Summary of Offer

The Council is offering Parish Councils the opportunity to administer this service within their areas thus enabling them to locally determine how the service is provided.

Details of Current Service Provision

The service is currently carried out by a single contractor covering all Parishes in the borough with the exception of Cookham and Old Windsor, who already arrange routine vegetation clearance on public rights of way in their areas.

The contract is let on an annual basis, and the current contract expires in April 2013. The value of the contract for 2012/13 is £18,000. Invitations for tender for the 2013/14 contract are due to be issued in January 2013.

The contract includes a schedule of programmed works for example strimming and mowing vegetation growing on the paths, and a unit price for reactive tree clearance works.

A key element of managing the contract is responding to queries and reports from members of the public concerning the timing and standard of works undertaken.

Benefits

Opportunities exist for local knowledge to be applied in the detail of the service provided, for example the timing and frequency of cutting and mowing operations.

Parish Council's may also be able to harness volunteer, community or residents groups to assist with carrying out work where appropriate or be able to add these to other existing arrangements for maintenance of Parish open/green spaces.

Options for Consideration

- The Parish fully administers the vegetation clearance service including the setting of specifications, timing and frequency of clearance works and responding to enquiries and reports from members of the public.

Or

- The Parish partially administers the vegetation clearance service, for example dealing with scheduled works only whilst the Borough deals with reactive tree clearance, or vice versa.

Or

- The Parish identifies works they wish to see included in the contract managed by the Borough and communicates this to the Borough through the existing Parish Paths Partnership.

Further Information

The Council is keen to progress these proposals. To discuss these proposals please contact Anthony Hurst, Principal Rights of Way Officer, on 01628 796180.