

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 18TH MAY 2010
 title: PUBLIC REALM INTEGRATION PROJECT
 submitted by: JOHN C HEAP - DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To tell members of Committee about the progress that has been made as regards taking on additional services under the heading of Lancashire County Councils, Public Realm Integration Project.

1.3 Relevance to the Council's aims and ambitions: -

- Mission statement & vision shared with the Local Strategic Partnership
 - An area with an exceptional environment and quality of life for all sustained by vital and vibrant market towns and villages acting as thriving service centres meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors.
- Council Ambitions
 - To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.
 - To be a well managed Council providing efficient services based on identified customer needs.
- Council Objectives
 - To encourage economic activity to increase business and employment opportunities;
 - To support the regeneration of Market Towns and sustainable service centres;
 - To ensure continuous improvement:
 - To reduce levels of and perception of crime and disorder;
 - To contribute to minimising the impact of Global Warming;
 - To provide a high quality environment, keeping land clear of litter and refuse and reducing the incidents of dog fouling.
- Citizens Charter
 - We will clean the streets;
 - Clean our public conveniences on a daily basis;
 - Carry out enforcement of our pay and display car parks;
 - Manage the CCTV system in Clitheroe & Whalley;
 - Cut the grass in our parks and open spaces regularly;
 - Encourage tourism in our area;
 - Control fly tipping, graffiti and dog fouling.
- RVBC Environmental Charter
 - Promote the public enjoyment and access to the countryside and to develop the most effective use of our own areas of public open space.

- Other Considerations
 - The public do not really understand the division of functions between the County Council and the Borough Council. As the Borough Council is the collection agency for the Council Tax most residents assume and believe therefore that we either provide or manage particular County services such as highway maintenance, traffic management, cutting of grass verges, street lighting, gritting, etc, and look to Ribble Valley members and officers who are situated locally to their problems to deal with their requests and complaints.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Since Local Government Reorganisation in 1974 the County Council has been responsible for the delivery of all highway related functions. At that time all the newly created District/Borough Councils were offered an Agency Agreement for the maintenance of certain roads in their area in what were described as 'core areas'. In the case of Ribble Valley this amounted to a very small nucleus of streets in Clitheroe and Longridge with the County Council maintaining all other roads, streets and footpaths in the Borough. In all other authorities the core areas were significant, for instance the core area of Hyndburn was the whole Borough, and so the other districts entered into Highways Agency Agreements. Members of Ribble Valley at the time wanted to take responsibility for all the roads in the Borough except trunk roads but Lancashire County Council would not agree to that. As a result the Borough Council declined to take on any highways maintenance responsibilities in the area as it was neither viable to do so nor helpful to the public's perception of who did what.

2.2 However the Borough Council did enter into an Agency Agreement to make up to an adoptable standard any privately owned streets in the Borough and to supervise the design and construction of new roads, such as on housing estates, in the Borough. This arrangement continued very successfully until the Agency Agreement was terminated and replaced with the Lancashire Highways Partnership Agreement in 2003. In 2006 that Agreement was replaced with the Residual Highways Partnership. Each time the Agreements had changed the County Council took back more functions in-house and reduced the funding for those functions delivered by Districts.

2.3 In the report presented to the meeting of this Committee held on Tuesday 14th July 2009 regarding the Street Services Agreement with Lancashire County Council I mentioned the likely emergence of the intentions to launch a Public Realm strategy by the County Council. Committee resolved at Min 190(2) to

- continue to press the County Council for greater devolvement to the Borough Council in order to deliver locally other highway related services and that they be properly funded so that they do not become a burden on this Council's budget and resources.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Following the decision of this Committee held on 3rd November 2009 to support the Council's involvement in the County Council's Public Realm Integration Project negotiations have taken place with officers of the County Council over what services that might be delegated to the Borough Council for us to carry out for them and at what cost. I am pleased to report that discussions and negotiations have been both amicable and positive and as a result the Council is now carrying out the cutting of

grass verges in mainly urban areas and weed control in the highway throughout the Borough for the County Council.

- 3.2 These delegated services are added to the ones already carried out, they being the clearance of leaves from the highway as part of our street cleaning service and the management and maintenance of Public Rights of Way in 26 Parishes in the Borough.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

Resources

- The Council now receives £10,800 for the work involved with the cutting of grass verges and £6,000 for weed control in the highway. The funding will contribute to the cost of the grounds maintenance and street cleansing services we provide at present and any additional staff resources and materials needed to efficiently and effectively carry out these functions.

Technical, Environmental & Legal

- The Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing teams have the technical skills to carry out the work and the quality we can add to the work should improve the local environment where the work is being carried out. The existing Street Services Agreement will be extended to incorporate the new functions we are doing for the County Council.

Political

- There are no known political issues arising out of this report.

Reputation

- There is a much improved relationship now between the Borough Council and County Council on work of mutual interest and benefit, which gives better joined up working across the two tiers of local government. This must be good for the reputation of both Councils.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Good progress has been made on taking on new delegated services under the County Councils Public Realm Integration Project which should benefit both parties and lead to service improvements. Details of the areas of grass verge being cut will be sent to those Parishes where the work is now being done by the Borough Council in due course. The initiative and its benefits should be supported.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Background Papers

- Min N^o 497 of Community Services Committee 3rd November 2009

For further information please contact Graham Jagger on 01200 414523.