

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: 15 MARCH 2016
 title: LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC REALM BUDGET CHANGES
 submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To advise Members of changes to the public realm budget received by RVBC from Lancashire County Council (LCC) to carry out work on their behalf in the Borough on verge grass cutting, leaf clearance, and weed spraying.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
- Corporate Priorities - To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area
- Other Considerations – To help make people's lives safer and healthier

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 RVBC carries out a range of public realm work which is part of the normal activities of this Council. This is paid for from the Council revenue budget assigned to the Community Services Department. In addition, the Council carries out work on behalf of Lancashire County Council, for which LCC pays RVBC a sum annually. This is an arrangement which operates county-wide, and all districts receive a sum of money from the County to carry out work on their behalf on land owned by, or the responsibility of, the County Council. The sums vary, but the scope of the work covered is broadly similar.

2.2 The work covered by this agreement consists of verge maintenance (grass cutting primarily), leaf clearance from main roads, and weed spraying. The work is carried out as part of the normal day activities of the Council staff allocated to the task, thereby ensuring it is done in the most economical manner possible, alongside similar work being carried out on RVBC land, or which is the responsibility of RVBC.

2.3 Since 2011, the annual budget from LCC for the work we carry out for them has dropped 25%, and for 2016/17 was scheduled to be £30,000. This sum is the smallest of any of the districts in the County. RVBC has now been informed that, following the LCC budget review, the sum will drop to £24,000 for 2016/17. Other districts in the County have also been informed of reductions in their LCC budget allocations.

2.4 The proposed split is:

Verge maintenance	£8,350
Leaf clearance	£11,620

Weed spraying £4,030

- 2.5 There are three areas where the verges cut are alongside RVBC land, Billington Gardens, St Mary's Mellor, and Chatburn. It is planned for these to be cut on the same frequency as RVBC verges, as crews will be there anyway, because this Council has not reduced the budget we have for our land. Where the reductions will be noticed more will be areas where our staff visit less frequently simply to cut the LCC verges, grass in those areas will receive fewer cuts per season, and grow to a longer length before cutting, owing to the reduction in budget.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 It is planned that, in the forthcoming year, the work for the County Council will be carried out according to the budget available, but obviously with some reductions to reflect the cut in the budget allocation.
- 3.2 The number of grass cuts on behalf of LCC will be reduced to 4 per year, this compares to perhaps twice or more than that for RVBC land.
- 3.3 Weed spraying will only be carried out once per year on LCC areas.
- 3.4 There will be a reduction in leaf clearance on the roads, which are done for LCC.
- 3.5 The public will inevitably notice some differences to the standards of maintenance. However, they will have to be informed that RVBC is unable to make good the budget shortfall which has been imposed on us from the budget reductions at LCC.
- 3.6 The situation will be monitored and, if there is a further reduction in funding, it is possible that this Council may decide in future years not to carry out the LCC work on their behalf, because it would be uneconomical to do so.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications

- Resources – RVBC has a limited revenue budget of its own to carry out the significant scheduled public realm work, the budget reduction from LCC for their work cannot be absorbed into the existing work of RVBC
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The responsibility for the work lies with LCC. Their officers are aware that the reduced budget allocation they have had to impose will reduce standards on their land
- Reputation – Unfortunately, for residents and visitors alike, the differentiation between the responsibilities of the County Council and RVBC in public realm matters is impossible to convey. Therefore, the likely presumption from members of the public will be a drop in standards from RVBC. However, LCC has been informed where complaints arise, and they are accountable to LCC. RVBC will pass complainants on to LCC for a response.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

Approves the proposals set out in the report for addressing the reduction in budget from LCC for carrying out their public realm work in the Borough.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

For further information, please contact Mark Beveridge 01200 414479

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