

# CABINET

## SHARED SERVICES- Public Realm Dec 7th 2010

### Report of Head of Environmental Services

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To seek approval for the principle of the City Council directly delivering a range of public realm services on behalf of the County Council.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member	
Date Included in Forward Plan	Nov 2010			

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

- (1) That Cabinet approves the principle of the City Council directly delivering a range of public realm services on behalf of the County Council.
- (2) That the Head of Environmental Services is delegated to agree the details of the public realm agreement with County.
- (3) That, once details are agreed relevant general fund budgets are updated accordingly, subject to there being no costs falling to the City Council.

#### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council are keen to promote closer working and shared service delivery arrangements to provide better value for money and improved service delivery standards for citizens of Lancashire. A key action of the City Council's corporate plan is 'to implement the council's agreed programme for shared services and research other opportunities wherever possible.' The 'public realm' is an area where by working together it is expected improvements can be made. For the purposes of this report 'public realm' refers mainly to highways, grassed verges and hedges for which the County Council has responsibility.
- 1.2 The following functions are already carried out by the City Council on behalf of the County Council under an existing agreement: -
  - Highways grass cutting- urban core of District
  - Weed control- urban core of District
  - Tree maintenance- urban core of District

- Shrub maintenance- urban core of District
- Leaf sweep- full district

There is a clear business case for the City Council continuing to provide these services.

1.3 Work has been taking place to establish what benefits there would be if the County and City Council developed this relationship further.

## **2.0 Proposal Details**

2.1 To this end detailed work has taken place to establish the benefits of the City Council directly delivering the following services on behalf of the County Council-

- Highways grass cutting- in rural settlements. Currently delivered by a combination of contractors and Parish Councils on behalf of the County Council.
- Highways grass cutting- safety swathes outside of rural settlements. Currently delivered by contractors on behalf of the County Council.
- Weed control- in rural settlements. Currently delivered by contractors on behalf of the County Council.
- Emergency tree work- extension of existing arrangements with the City Council.
- Shrub maintenance- all District. Currently delivered by contractors on behalf of the County Council.
- First stage enforcement of overhanging vegetation- currently delivered by County Council.
- Emergency out of hours sweeping after road traffic incidents- formalisation of existing arrangement with the City Council.

2.2 The benefits of the City Council delivering these services would be -

- Service delivery joined up with other services- eg we could easily coordinate grass cutting which is currently carried out by contractors on behalf of the County Council with street sweeping which is carried out by the City Council.
- Improved customer service- the current split of responsibility between County and City Council is confusing to residents and causes frustration. Regardless of which Council the resident contacted the issue would be dealt with by the City Council.
- Improved efficiency- the City Council already has a directly provided grounds maintenance service that undertakes County work in the urban core. Extending this provides economies of scale and improves value for money.
- Improved service for Parish Councils- the majority of the proposed work is carried out in Parish areas. This proposal will ensure a consistent approach to service delivery in those areas. For public realm issues the main point of contact for the Parish Council would be the City Council.

2.3 The undertaking to do this work would be clearly set out in a formal agreement. It is expected that the City Council would commence provision of the majority of the work in April 2011. The remainder of the work would commence April 2012.

- 2.4 Based on current budgets for all the scheduled work an annual amount of approx £83,000 will be provided by County Council to the City Council (£57,000 in 2011/12). For emergency works payments will be made by the County Council following orders to carry out the works.
- 2.5 The majority of the scheduled work is grass cutting in rural settlements. In order to best fit in with the existing City Council mowing operations it is expected that County Council land in these areas will be mowed to similar frequencies as in the urban core. In many areas this will represent a significant improvement in service delivery. To mow less than this would require completely different machinery and cause major disruption to the existing City Council operation.
- 2.6 An agreement between the City and County Council to carry out this public realm work would result in the cessation of any existing arrangements the County Council have with individual Parish Councils to undertake activities such as mowing. It is expected that the benefits as outlined would more than compensate for this.

### 3.0 Details of Consultation

#### 4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	<b>Option 1:</b> To enter into a public realm agreement with the County Council for direct delivery by the City Council of a range of services	<b>Option 2:</b> To not enter into a public realm agreement
Advantages	<p>Joins up District and County public realm services</p> <p>Improved customer service</p> <p>Improved efficiency</p> <p>Consistent service for rural settlements / Parishes</p> <p>Improved consistency of service between rural and urban areas.</p>	Maintains status quo
Disadvantages	Parish Councils that previously directly undertook work on behalf of the County Council may feel they have less control of service delivery.	Contrary to Corporate Plan and goes against agreed shared services programme.
Risks	The County Council decide to offer Parishes the option to deliver some of the services themselves- in which case the business case on which our agreement would be based would no longer be viable.	

	As a result of the comprehensive spending review the County Council reduces budgets available for this work.	
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The Officer preferred option is Option 1

## 5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The report provides Cabinet with information on which to determine whether the principle of entering into a public realm agreement with the County Council achieves the City Council's objectives.

### **CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)**

The impact of the public realm services outlined in the report will be mainly felt within the rural areas of the District. A public realm agreement would seek to ensure that consistent levels of service are provided within the rural areas.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Legal Services will advise on the contents of any proposed agreement with the County Council.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

An initial appraisal of the costs related to the delivery of a range of public realm services on behalf of the County Council has been undertaken and the work can be completed on a cost neutral basis.

### **OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

#### **Human Resources:**

At this stage there are no known Human Resource implications to consider.

#### **Information Services:**

There are no IS implications to consider

#### **Property:**

There are no property implications to consider

#### **Open Spaces:**

There will be implications for the way the County Council's land is managed and the details of these will be set out in any public realm agreement.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The s151 Officer has been consulted and would advise that safeguards are in place to ensure that any agreement would be implemented and managed within the existing budget framework.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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