

Parishes Liaison Meeting – 18th June 2014 – item 12

Parish Ranger Pilot

As you are aware the Parish Ranger pilot was extended until the end of July. During this period we have learned much although the scheme has unfortunately not proved to be cost neutral. We will therefore be ending it in its present form at the end of the pilot, and will use what we have learned to make our existing services more responsive and customer focussed.

As a result, we now plan to:

- Introduce a new “Ranger” role into the wider Neighbourhoods operational team to carry out various jobs like mending benches, lopping branches and cleaning signs more quickly on the highway and in green spaces, working closely with our colleagues to assist where our highways contractor cannot prioritise work.
- Increase training for Cleansing/Neighbourhoods staff to be more vigilant to issues and to act on the spot where they can, where it is safe and practical to do so.
- Use our CRM system for “Report It” and to give streamlined administration through Council Connect
- Give clear response times for jobs so that Council Connect can feed this back to residents
- Work with the Highways Service to ensure outstanding lower priority jobs are tackled by our contractor in the summer quieter period.
- Publish clear timescales when low priority work will be completed by Highways gangs so that we can tell Parish Councils when work will be completed
- Increase liaison between the Highways gangs and Neighbourhoods Supervisors so that we use a bigger pool of resources to respond to issues.

We propose to carry out, with Parish Council representatives, a thorough review of the Parish Sweeping scheme in 2015 with a view to increasing community ownership and involvement in service provision. This could effectively result in the better use of the funding currently allocated to this scheme. As part of this review we will explore the potential for Parish Councils to be able to buy top up services from us to enhance standards in their areas if they wish.

What did we learn from the pilot?

Positives

- A responsive service - the majority of Parish Councils have given positive feedback and like the scheme, but not all feedback is positive.
- A backlog of outstanding work was completed initially, giving immediate impact in some parishes
- Good examples of how quicker response times have reduced issues such as removing fly tipping promptly, clearing debris from drain covers/channels

during the flooding, suspicious activity reported to police, litter droppers tackled on the spot when observed.

- Useful learning about how we could improve our existing services to be more responsive
- The trial has demonstrated that existing resources could be used more productively, and that management & administration can be streamlined using mobile technology and one point of contact through Council Connect.

Concerns

- No significant long term demand for ad-hoc requests once the first tranche of jobs was complete and the backlog cleared.
- Over 50% of time now spent on routine cleansing activity (emptying bins, clearing litter, dead animal removal, low level cleansing enforcement) which could be covered by existing cleansing staff.
- HR issues - lone working, management/supervision/monitoring, and lack of resilience due to low number of staff involved
- Some overlap with Parish Sweeping scheme
- No further funding has been identified within existing Environmental Services budgets to expand the scheme as there is still a need for highway gangs, highway inspector, cleansing/waste and grounds operatives to visit each parish.

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