

Notes

Working Group on Devolved Services

19 Sept 2024 /19.00

Apologises

J Cook, G Young

Present

Cllrs Brown, Rossetti, Stanhope and Gupta

Joining 19.04 Cllr Kinchin

Cllr. Gupta Left meeting at 19.30

Notes from last working group meeting accepted

No declarations of Interest

Discussion

WG confirmed understanding that it is the whole package of devolved is taken. But that there are no Bucks hedges in this Parish - therefore while that is included in the contract there is no actual work of this nature.

Devolution agreement sets out the details of the areas of work, which includes hedge cutting. But Parish would need to manage the process of advising a landowner to cut the hedge (if needed).

WG Agreement that a pre-condition of taking on devolved services is that a permanent clerk be appointed.

Discussion on who would perform a feasibility study – internal resource or external resource.

Feasibility study may include the work processes undertaken by internal admin support

Agreed that a trial period of one year is in scope only at this stage.

How much, if any financial contribution, should Parish plan to include delivering the service. Discussion to keep within the funding available and asking residents if more service is needed and are prepared to fund.

Small Survey with some residents about their thoughts on grass cutting (number of instances) and support for or not a precept increase to support the instances of services.

Confirm with Zoe re the hedge cutting issue – actually any work for this Parish

Discussion if the WG should include making recommendations regarding the scope of a feasibility study. Disagreement if scope of the WG to include SOW of the feasibility study.

Cllr R contacted 7 Parish / Town Councils to ask about their experience. 5 responded. These entities that were either similar in size to us and / or on the list provided by Zoe.

Findings:

Councils did not have outdoor staff to do the work

Most Councils put the whole devolved put the whole body of work out to contract

Contract management is a major feature

Savings on grass cutting – cut the kerbside only can save 35% . This is happening in many councils

Cllr JR noted that:

The listing from Bucks has 6 service elements with lineage and funding contribution to be made by Bucks. That data for verge cutting can be provided to potential providers to get quotes and then take that information feed into the decision making process.

Items 3 4 5 6 may be items that could be done internally – The dep clerk could consider and then these items should be included in a feasibility study

Discussion if the feasibility is a legal requirement – request for this in writing as it is unclear.

Outcome

To recommend to OP and Highways that a feasibility study should be undertaken to provide further details on specific costs and internal capabilities to undertake work.

Purpose & Scope

Why Residents have noticed a great decline in the general appearance of the parish
Residents asked at the Annual meeting that Ivers Parish Council investigate taking on this service from Buckinghamshire council.

Two main documents from BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HIGHWAYS

1 Local council highways devolution scheme agreement.

This is for Clerk/Officer. or a legal representative to provide advice on the clauses of the document. The document is presented as a form of a contract with a duration for one year only

Buckinghamshire council devolution first schedule.

This document describes the services that are included. The whole selection of activities comprise the devolved services a Parish / Town Council cannot select out of a particular service.

The activities are presented with information as you “do not/do/ensure you do” notes. Shown in brackets is the possible groups of people who may be involved in providing this service as per the Bucks information.

1. **TREES-minimal cutbacks only to be carried out to remove hazard/visibility issue, limited size of branch** (contractor/in house,/volunteer groups)
2. **Hedges** (contractor/ landowners)
3. **Slipped/wonky/dirty signs** (contractor/in house, volunteer groups)
4. **Siding out** (contractor/in house/ volunteer groups)
5. **Weeds** (contractor/in house/volunteer groups)
6. **Urban grass** (contractor/in house/volunteer groups)
7. **Flyposting on street furniture** (contractor/in house)
8. **General maintenance** (in house/fix my street)
9. **Rights of way – 8 identified** (contractor/in house/volunteer groups)

Break down of devolved services payment

1. hedges 95,912 lm £4603.78
2. urban grass 83,964 sqm £4260.33
3. siding out - 56,688 lm - £1417.20
4. 8 ROW - 12,045lm - £1296.64 – annual clearance only
5. weed removal - 56,688 lm - £2163.21
6. general maintenance - 56,688 lm - £1998.25

This is a total contribution from Bucks or £17,022.18 p.a.

Significant points learnt from other Parish / Town Councils

- Outsourced provides used for outdoors work
- Volunteers play a role in the delivery of many services
- Admin related work performed in house using Bucks templates (where available)

- Most Parish Councils in our area are not part of a hub for service delivery
- Many report that they exceed Bucks requirements, as this is what their residents want. Therefore, Bucks contribution does not pay for the entire service.

Key points of discussion and agreement from the Working Group

- Additional workload for staff cannot be readily accommodated and therefore should be avoided or minimised.
- Any contract management for devolved services should be undertaken by the Clerk.
- The arrangements with Bucks are on an annual basis. Therefore no need to commit to anything more than a year at a time.
- Use technology where possible to support the admin based processes.
- Cllr and Volunteers can be mobilised for delivery of certain services.

Accept the scope document produced the working group.

1. That devolved services from Bucks Council not be undertaken in the coming financial year 2025/26
2. That a budget allocation be set aside for a feasibility study to be conducted in the financial year 2025/26.