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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

of the meeting of the **Working Party** formed to consider **Highway Verge Maintenance** held on **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2018**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **3:00pm**.

**PRESENT** Cllrs Catlin; Lamb; Murray (S); O’Keeffe; Renton and (*not appointed to the Working party*) Mayhew.

**In attendance:** S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

**HVMWP2017/01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN:** Cllr R O’Keeffe was elected to act as Chairman of the Working Party for the 2017/18 year.

**HVMWP2017/02 QUESTIONS:** There were none.

**HVMWP2017/03 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** There were none

**HVMWP2017/04 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none

**HVMWP2017/05 REMIT of the WORKING PARTY:**

Members noted the remit of the Working Party, set by Council at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018:

(*Minute FC2017/101 refers*) HIGHWAY VERGE MAINTENANCE:

Members considered report FC014/2017 (*copy in minute book*) regarding implications of East Sussex County Council reductions in highways verge maintenance:

A message had been received from East Sussex County Council’s Director, Communities; Economy & Transport, which explained a reduction in highway contract costs of £400,000 for grass cutting services effective from 1 April 2018. ESCC would be reducing the number of urban grass cuts from the current six per season to two per season from 1 April 2018. This was a change to their urban grass cutting policy (which currently provided for a minimum of five cuts per season) and a report was to be presented to their Lead Member for Transport and Environment in May 2018 with a recommendation to change the policy to reflect the agreed budget.

A map and table of the total areas of the rural and urban grass verges that were currently cut in Lewes was appended, and it was noted that in reducing the urban grass cutting service from six to two cuts per season ESCC would be managing urban grass for safety reasons only. However, recognizing that grass verges in urban centres have an important aesthetic function for the community, two options were offered for consideration:

a) A financial contribution to the Town Council equivalent to the value of two urban grass cuts based on current ESCC contract rates which was £2,643 per annum. This could be provided as a basis to commission and employ the Council’s own contractor

b) For the Town Council to pay for additional urban grass cuts over the two cuts per season provided by the County Council. To maintain the current standard of six cuts this would cost Lewes Town Council in the region of £5,287 per annum.

An indication as to which option the Council wished to pursue was requested by 31 March 2018 at the latest.

Details were provided of the financial implications. Lewes Town Council’s approved budget for 2018/19 included elements which could be applied or redirected to fund the maintenance of current frequency of cuts, and earmarked

Reserves held balances which could be utilized in the short term.

Following discussion **it was resolved that:**

**FC2017/101.1** A Working Party be set up consisting of Cllrs Catlin, Lamb, S Murray, O’Keeffe and Renton to look in detail at Highway Verge Maintenance. The Working party was asked to suggest detailed exclusions/inclusions, and a letter would be sent to ESCC explaining the Council’s approach to these considerations.

**HVMWP2017/06 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:**

1 Members considered the maps and documents provided by ESCC and immediately noted that several areas were not, in fact, grass and should not require maintenance. Cllr O’Keeffe, as a County Councillor, offered to arrange to accompany an ESCC Highway Steward on a tour of the sites to clarify these points. Initially identified as needing to be checked:

- Corner of Grange Road/St Pancras Road – area believed to be the concreted ‘triangle’, which holds planters maintained by residents.
- Crisp Road (compacted mud)
- Top of Gundreda Road adj school
- Central reservation on A275 adj foot of the ‘Motor Road’ leading to Lewes Old Racecourse (believed concrete)
- Winterbourne Hollow
- Hill Road
- Dale Road

2 There was some discussion on the principles of Wildflower Verges, and what was involved to ensure that these did not become unsightly at ‘strategic’ locations. Also the distinction between ‘wildflower’ and ‘wildlife’. Members presumed that ESCC’s intended blanket reduction in cutting frequency effectively negated previous designation of specific verges as potential wildlife verges – as per ESCC proposals which had been agreed by Council in 2017. It was also presumed that wildflower verges may be proposed alongside the ‘new’ cutting schedules and, it was considered, should then receive only TWO cuts per year but with arisings collected to prevent improvement of soil conditions, and that these may ultimately be planted with appropriate species when funding can be found. They wished to propose this treatment for:

- Malling Down
- The Martlets
- West side of the A275, South of the junction with the Motor Road
- A277 Brighton Road – South side verge adj entrance to Haredean
- Phoenix Causeway adj Waitrose store

There was debate as to the true support for some areas currently included in the scheme – notably Brighton Road – and it was agreed that this should be considered in more detail at a further meeting, once ESCC’s position could be clarified.

3 With regard to the proposal to reduce Lewes urban verges to two cuts per year: Councillors wished to have this increased across the town to FOUR per year, except those designated as “Wildflower verges” – as above.

**HVMWP2017/07 CONCLUSIONS:**

ESCC would be advised, as soon as possible, of the matters detailed above, and requested to provide confirmation of the cost and practicality of the proposed 4 ‘general’ cuts per year

**HVMWP2017/08** The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting closed.

*The meeting closed at 4:20pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....